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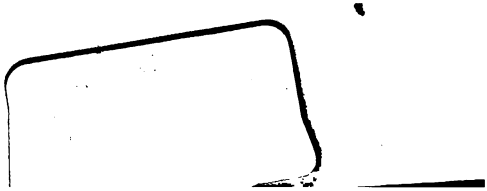

THE

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THE SHORTER POEMS

IN FOUR BOOKS

SHORTER POEMS

BOOK I

DEDICATED TO

H. E. W.

POETICAL WORKS

of

ROBERT BRIDGES

Volume II

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✱

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NEW POEMS.

Collected here for the first time.

✱

For account of earlier issues of first four books of Shorter Poems, and of some of the poems contained in the New Poems, see notes at end of this volume.

BOOK I

I

ELEGY

CLEAR and gentle stream!
Known and loved so long
That hast heard the song,
And the idle dream
Of my boyish day;
While I once again
Down thy margin stray,
In the selfsame strain
Still my voice is spent,
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream!

Where my old seat was
Here again I sit,
Where the long boughs knit
Over stream and grass
A translucent eaves:
Where back eddies play
Shipwreck with the leaves,
And the proud swans stray,
Sailing one by one
Out of stream and sun,
And the fish lie cool
In their chosen pool.

Many an afternoon
Of the summer day
Dreaming here I lay;
And I know how soon,
Idly at its hour,
First the deep bell hums
From the minster tower,
And then evening comes,
Creeping up the glade,
With her lengthening shade,
And the tardy boon,
Of her brightening moon.

Clear and gentle stream!
Ere again I go
Where thou dost not flow,
Well does it beseem
Thee to hear again
Once my youthful song,
That familiar strain
Silent now so long:
Be as I content
With my old lament
And my idle dream,
Clear and gentle stream.

2

ELEGY

THE wood is bare: a river-mist is steeping
The trees that winter's chill of life bereaves:
Only their stiffened boughs break silence, weeping
Over their fallen leaves;

That lie upon the dank earth brown and rotten,
Miry and matted in the soaking wet:
Forgotten with the spring, that is forgotten
By them that can forget.

Yet it was here we walked when ferns were springing,
And through the mossy bank shot bud and blade:—
Here found in summer, when the birds were singing,
A green and pleasant shade.

'Twas here we loved in sunnier days and greener;
And now, in this disconsolate decay,
I come to see her where I most have seen her,
And touch the happier day.

For on this path, at every turn and corner,
The fancy of her figure on me falls:
Yet walks she with the slow step of a mourner,
Nor hears my voice that calls.

So through my heart there winds a track of feeling,
A path of memory, that is all her own:
Whereto her phantom beauty ever stealing
Haunts the sad spot alone.

About her steps the trunks are bare, the branches
Drip heavy tears upon her downcast head;
And bleed from unseen wounds that no sun staunches,
For the year's sun is dead.

And dead leaves wrap the fruits that summer planted:
And birds that love the South have taken wing.
The wanderer, loitering o'er the scene enchanted,
Weeps, and despairs of spring.

3

Poor withered rose and dry,
  Skeleton of a rose,
Risen to testify
  To love's sad close:

Treasured for love's sweet sake,
  That of joy past
Thou might'st again awake
  Memory at last.

Yet is thy perfume sweet;
  Thy petals red
Yet tell of summer heat,
  And the gay bed:

Yet, yet recall the glow
  Of the gazing sun,
When at thy bush we two
  Joined hands in one.

But, rose, thou hast not seen,
  Thou hast not wept
The change that passed between,
  Whilst thou hast slept.

To me thou seemest yet
  The dead dream's thrall:
While I live and forget
  Dream, truth and all.

Thou art more fresh than I,
  Rose, sweet and red:
Salt on my pale cheeks lie
  The tears I shed.

4

THE CLIFF-TOP

THE cliff-top has a carpet
Of lilac, gold and green:
The blue sky bounds the ocean
The white clouds scud between.

A flock of gulls are wheeling
And wailing round my seat;
Above my head the heaven,
The sea beneath my feet.

THE OCEAN.

Were I a cloud I 'd gather
My skirts up in the air,
And fly I well know whither,
And rest I well know where.

As pointed the star surely,
The legend tells of old,
Where the wise kings might offer
Myrrh, frankincense, and gold;

Above the house I 'd hover
Where dwells my love, and wait
Till haply I might spy her
Throw back the garden-gate.

There in the summer evening
I would bedeck the moon;
I would float down and screen her
From the sun's rays at noon;

And if her flowers should languish,
Or wither in the drought,
Upon her tall white lilies
I 'd pour my heart's blood out:

So if she wore one only,
And shook not out the rain,
Were I a cloud, O cloudlet,
I had not lived in vain.

[*A cloud speaks.*

A CLOUD.

But were I thou, O ocean,
I would not chafe and fret
As thou, because a limit
To thy desires is set.

I would be blue, and gentle,
Patient, and calm, and see
If my smiles might not tempt her,
My love, to come to me.

I'd make my depths transparent,
And still, that she should lean
O'er the boat's edge to ponder
The sights that swam between.

I would command strange creatures,
Of bright hue and quick fin,
To stir the water near her,
And tempt her bare arm in.

I'd teach her spend the summer
With me: and I can tell,
That, were I thou, O ocean,
My love should love me well.

* *

But on the mad cloud scudded,
The breeze it blew so stiff;
And the sad ocean bellowed,
And pounded at the cliff.

5

I HEARD a linnet courting
His lady in the spring:
His mates were idly sporting,
Nor stayed to hear him sing
His song of love.—
I fear my speech distorting
His tender love.

The phrases of his pleading
Were full of young delight;
And she that gave him heeding
Interpreted aright
His gay, sweet notes,—
So sadly marred in the reading,—
His tender notes.

And when he ceased, the hearer
Awaited the refrain,
Till swiftly perching nearer
He sang his song again,
His pretty song:—
Would that my verse spake clearer
His tender song!

Ye happy, airy creatures!
That in the merry spring
Think not of what misfeatures
Or cares the year may bring;
But unto love
Resign your simple natures,
To tender love.

6

DEAR lady, when thou frownest,
And my true love despisest,
And all thy vows disownest
That sealed my venture wisest;
I think thy pride's displeasure
Neglects a matchless treasure
Exceeding price and measure.

But when again thou smilest,
And love for love returnest,
And fear with joy beguilest,
And takest truth in earnest;
Then, though I sheer adore thee,
The sum of my love for thee
Seems poor, scant, and unworthy.

7

I WILL not let thee go.
Ends all our month-long love in this?
Can it be summed up so,
Quit in a single kiss?
I will not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
If thy words' breath could scare thy deeds,
As the soft south can blow
And toss the feathered seeds,
Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
Had not the great sun seen, I might;
Or were he reckoned slow
To bring the false to light,
Then might I let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
The stars that crowd the summer skies

Have watched us so below
With all their million eyes,
I dare not let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
Have we not chid the changeful moon,
Now rising late, and now
Because she set too soon,
And shall I let thee go?

I will not let thee go.
Have not the young flowers been content,
Plucked ere their buds could blow,
To seal our sacrament?
I cannot let thee go.

I will not let thee go.
I hold thee by too many bands:
Thou sayest farewell, and lo!
I have thee by the hands,
And will not let thee go.

8

I FOUND to-day out walking
The flower my love loves best.
What, when I stooped to pluck it,
Could dare my hand arrest?

Was it a snake lay curling
About the root's thick crown?
Or did some hidden bramble
Tear my hand reaching down?

There was no snake uncurling,
And no thorn wounded me;
'Twas my heart checked me, sighing
She is beyond the sea.

9

A POPPY grows upon the shore,
Bursts her twin cup in summer late:
Her leaves are glaucous-green and hoar,
Her petals yellow, delicate.

Oft to her cousins turns her thought,
In wonder if they care that she
Is fed with spray for dew, and caught
By every gale that sweeps the sea.

She has no lovers like the red,
That dances with the noble corn:
Her blossoms on the waves are shed,
Where she stands shivering and forlorn.

10

SOMETIMES when my lady sits by me
My rapture's so great, that I tear
My mind from the thought that she's nigh me,
And strive to forget that she's there.
And sometimes when she is away
Her absence so sorely does try me,
That I shut to my eyes, and assay
To think she is there sitting by me.

II

Long are the hours the sun is above,
But when evening comes I go home to my love.

I'm away the daylight hours and more,
Yet she comes not down to open the door.

She does not meet me upon the stair,—
She sits in my chamber and waits for me there.

As I enter the room she does not move:
I always walk straight up to my love;

And she lets me take my wonted place
At her side, and gaze in her dear dear face.

There as I sit, from her head thrown back
Her hair falls straight in a shadow black.

Aching and hot as my tired eyes be,
She is all that I wish to see.

And in my wearied and toil-dinned ear,
She says all things that I wish to hear.

Dusky and duskier grows the room,
Yet I see her best in the darker gloom.

When the winter eves are early and cold,
The firelight hours are a dream of gold.

And so I sit here night by night,
In rest and enjoyment of love's delight.

But a knock at the door, a step on the stair
Will startle, alas, my love from her chair.

If a stranger comes she will not stay:
At the first alarm she is off and away.

And he wonders, my guest, usurping her throne,
That I sit so much by myself alone.

12

WHO has not walked upon the shore,
And who does not the morning know,
The day the angry gale is o'er,
The hour the wind has ceased to blow?

The horses of the strong south-west
Are pastured round his tropic tent,
Careless how long the ocean's breast
Sob on and sigh for passion spent.

The frightened birds, that fled inland
To house in rock and tower and tree,
Are gathering on the peaceful strand,
To tempt again the sunny sea;

Whereon the timid ships steal out
And laugh to find their foe asleep,
That lately scattered them about,
And drave them to the fold like sheep.

The snow-white clouds he northward chased
Break into phalanx, line, and band:
All one way to the south they haste,
The south, their pleasant fatherland.

From distant hills their shadows creep,
Arrive in turn and mount the lea,
And flit across the downs, and leap
Sheer off the cliff upon the sea;

And sail and sail far out of sight.
But still I watch their fleecy trains,
That piling all the south with light,
Dapple in France the fertile plains.

13

I MADE another song,
In likeness of my love:
And sang it all day long,
Around, beneath, above;
I told my secret out,
That none might be in doubt.

I sang it to the sky,
That veiled his face to hear
How far her azure eye
Outdoes his splendid sphere;
But at her eyelids' name
His white clouds fled for shame.

I told it to the trees,
And to the flowers confest,
And said not one of these
Is like my lily drest;

Nor spathe nor petal dared
Vie with her body bared.

I shouted to the sea,
That set his waves a-prance;
Her floating hair is free,
Free are her feet to dance;
And for thy wrath, I swear
Her frown is more to fear.

And as in happy mood
I walked and sang alone,
At eve beside the wood
I met my love, my own:
And sang to her the song
I had sung all day long.

14

ELEGY

ON A LADY, WHOM GRIEF FOR THE DEATH OF HER BETROTHED KILLED

Assemble, all ye maidens, at the door,
And all ye loves, assemble; far and wide
Proclaim the bridal, that proclaimed before
Has been deferred to this late eventide:
For on this night the bride,
The days of her betrothal over,
Leaves the parental hearth for evermore;
To-night the bride goes forth to meet her lover.

Reach down the wedding vesture, that has lain
Yet all unvisited, the silken gown:
Bring out the bracelets, and the golden chain
Her dearer friends provided: sere and brown
Bring out the festal crown,
And set it on her forehead lightly:
Though it be withered, twine no wreath again;
This only is the crown she can wear rightly.

Cloke her in ermine, for the night is cold,
And wrap her warmly, for the night is long,
In pious hands the flaming torches hold,
While her attendants, chosen from among
Her faithful virgin throng,
May lay her in her cedar litter,
Decking her coverlet with sprigs of gold,
Roses, and lilies white that best befit her.

Sound flute and tabor, that the bridal be
Not without music, nor with these alone;
But let the viol lead the melody,
With lesser intervals, and plaintive moan
Of sinking semitone;
And, all in choir, the virgin voices
Rest not from singing in skilled harmony
The song that aye the bridegroom's ear rejoices.

Let the priests go before, arrayed in white,
And let the dark-stoled minstrels follow slow,
Next they that bear her, honoured on this night,
And then the maidens, in a double row,
Each singing soft and low,
And each on high a torch upstaying:
Unto her lover lead her forth with light,
With music, and with singing, and with praying.

'Twas at this sheltering hour he nightly came,
And found her trusty window open wide,
And knew the signal of the timorous flame,
That long the restless curtain would not hide
Her form that stood beside;
As scarce she dared to be delighted,
Listening to that sweet tale, that is no shame
To faithful lovers, that their hearts have plighted.

But now for many days the dewy grass
Has shown no markings of his feet at morn:
And watching she has seen no shadow pass
The moonlit walk, and heard no music borne
Upon her ear forlorn.
In vain has she looked out to greet him;
He has not come, he will not come, alas!
So let us bear her out where she must meet him.

Now to the river bank the priests are come:
The bark is ready to receive its freight:
Let some prepare her place therein, and some
Embark the litter with its slender weight:
The rest stand by in state,
And sing her a safe passage over;
While she is oared across to her new home,
Into the arms of her expectant lover.

And thou, O lover, that art on the watch,
Where, on the banks of the forgetful streams,
The pale indifferent ghosts wander, and snatch
The sweeter moments of their broken dreams,—
Thou, when the torchlight gleams,
When thou shalt see the slow procession,
And when thine ears the fitful music catch,
Rejoice, for thou art near to thy possession.

15

RONDEAU

His poisoned shafts, that fresh he dips
In juice of plants that no bee sips,
He takes, and with his bow renown'd
Goes out upon his hunting ground,
Hanging his quiver at his hips.

He draws them one by one, and clips
Their heads between his finger-tips,
And looses with a twanging sound
His poisoned shafts.

But if a maiden with her lips
Suck from the wound the blood that drips,
And drink the poison from the wound,
The simple remedy is found
That of their deadly terror strips
His poisoned shafts.

16

TRIOLET

WHEN first we met we did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master;
Of more than common friendliness
When first we met we did not guess.
Who could foretell this sore distress,
This irretrievable disaster
When first we met?—We did not guess
That Love would prove so hard a master.

17

TRIOLET

ALL women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.
If nought seem better, nothing 's worse:
All women born are so perverse.
From Adam's wife, that proved a curse
Though God had made her for a blessing,
All women born are so perverse
No man need boast their love possessing.

SHORTER POEMS

BOOK II

TO

THE MEMORY OF

G. M. H.

BOOK II

I

MUSE.

WILL Love again awake,
That lies asleep so long?

POET.

O hush! ye tongues that shake
The drowsy night with song.

MUSE.

It is a lady fair
Whom once he deigned to praise,
That at the door doth dare
Her sad complaint to raise.

POET.

She must be fair of face,
As bold of heart she seems,
If she would match her grace
With the delight of dreams.

MUSE.

Her beauty would surprise
Gazers on Autumn eves,
Who watched the broad moon rise
Upon the scattered sheaves.

POET.

O sweet must be the voice
He shall descend to hear,
Who doth in Heaven rejoice
His most enchanted ear.

MUSE.

The smile, that rests to play
Upon her lip, foretells
What musical array
Tricks her sweet syllables.

POET.

And yet her smiles have danced
In vain, if her discourse
Win not the soul entranced
In divine intercourse.

MUSE.

She will encounter all
This trial without shame,
Her eyes men Beauty call,
And Wisdom is her name.

POET.

Throw back the portals then,
Ye guards, your watch that keep,
Love will awake again
That lay so long asleep.

2

A PASSER-BY

WHITHER, O splendid ship, thy white sails crowding,
Leaning across the bosom of the urgent West,
That fearest nor sea rising, nor sky clouding,
Whither away, fair rover, and what thy quest?
Ah! soon, when Winter has all our vales opprest,
When skies are cold and misty, and hail is hurling,
Wilt thóu glíde on the blue Pacific, or rest
In a summer haven asleep, thy white sails furling.

I there before thee, in the country that well thou knowest,
Already arrived am inhaling the odorous air:
I watch thee enter unerringly where thou goest,
And anchor queen of the strange shipping there,
Thy sails for awnings spread, thy masts bare:

Nor is aught from the foaming reef to the snow-
capped, grandest
Peak, that is over the feathery palms more fair
Than thou, so upright, so stately, and still thou
standest.

And yet, O splendid ship, unhailed and nameless,
I know not if, aiming a fancy, I rightly divine
That thou hast a purpose joyful, a courage blameless,
Thy port assured in a happier land than mine.
But for all I have given thee, beauty enough is
thine,
As thou, aslant with trim tackle and shrouding,
From the proud nostril curve of a prow's line
In the offing scatterest foam, thy white sails crowding.

3

LATE SPRING EVENING

I saw the Virgin-mother clad in green,
Walking the sprinkled meadows at sundown;
While yet the moon's cold flame was hung between
The day and night, above the dusky town:
I saw her brighter than the Western gold,
Whereto she faced in splendour to behold.

Her dress was greener than the tenderest leaf
That trembled in the sunset glare aglow:
Herself more delicate than is the brief,
Pink apple-blossom, that May showers lay low,
And more delicious than 's the earliest streak
The blushing rose shows of her crimson cheek.

As if to match the sight that so did please,
A music entered, making passion fain:
Three nightingales sat singing in the trees,
And praised the Goddess for the fallen rain;
Which yet their unseen motions did arouse,
Or parting Zephyrs shook out from the boughs.

And o'er the treetops, scattered in mid air,
The exhausted clouds, laden with crimson light
Floated, or seemed to sleep; and, highest there,
One planet broke the lingering ranks of night;
Daring day's company, so he might spy
The Virgin-queen once with his watchful eye.

And when I saw her, then I worshipped her,
And said,—O bounteous Spring, O beauteous Spring,
Mother of all my years, thou who dost stir
My heart to adore thee and my tongue to sing,
Flower of my fruit, of my heart's blood the fire,
Of all my satisfaction the desire!

How art thou every year more beautiful,
Younger for all the winters thou hast cast:
And I, for all my love grows, grow more dull,
Decaying with each season overpast!
In vain to teach him love must man employ thee,
The more he learns the less he can enjoy thee.

4

WOOING

I KNOW not how I came,
New on my knightly journey,
To win the fairest dame
That graced my maiden tourney.

Chivalry's lovely prize
With all men's gaze upon her,
Why did she free her eyes
On me, to do me honour?

Ah! ne'er had I my mind
With such high hope delighted,
Had she not first inclined,
And with her eyes invited.

But never doubt I knew,
Having their glance to cheer me,
Until the day joy grew
Too great, too sure, too near me.

When hope a fear became,
And passion, grown too tender,
Now trembled at the shame
Of a despised surrender;

And where my love at first
Saw kindness in her smiling,
I read her pride, and cursed
The arts of her beguiling.

Till winning less than won,
And liker wooed than wooing,
Too late I turned undone
Away from my undoing;

And stood beside the door,
Whereto she followed, making
My hard leave-taking more
Hard by her sweet leave-taking.

Her speech would have betrayed
Her thought, had mine been colder:
Her eyes distress had made
A lesser lover bolder.

But no! Fond heart, distrust,
Cried Wisdom, and consider:
Go free, since go thou must;—
And so farewell I bid her.

And brisk upon my way
I smote the stroke to sever,
And should have lost that day
My life's delight for ever:

But when I saw her start
And turn aside and tremble;—
Ah! she was true, her heart
I knew did not dissemble.

5

THERE is a hill beside the silver Thames,
Shady with birch and beech and odorous pine:
And brilliant underfoot with thousand gems
Steeply the thickets to his floods decline.
Straight trees in every place
Their thick tops interlace,
And pendant branches trail their foliage fine
Upon his watery face.

Swift from the sweltering pasturage he flows:
His stream, alert to seek the pleasant shade,
Pictures his gentle purpose, as he goes
Straight to the caverned pool his toil has made.
His winter floods lay bare
The stout roots in the air:
His summer streams are cool, when they have played
Among their fibrous hair.

A rushy island guards the sacred bower,
And hides it from the meadow, where in peace
The lazy cows wrench many a scented flower,
Robbing the golden market of the bees:
And laden barges float
By banks of myosote;
And scented flag and golden flower-de-lys
Delay the loitering boat.

And on this side the island, where the pool
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass
The water-weeds, that net the fishes cool,
And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass;
Where spreading crowfoot mars
The drowning nenuphars,
Waving the tassels of her silken grass
Below her silver stars.

But in the purple pool there nothing grows,
Not the white water-lily spoked with gold;
Though best she loves the hollows, and well knows
On quiet streams her broad shields to unfold:
Yet should her roots but try
Within these deeps to lie,
Not her long reaching stalk could ever hold
Her waxen head so high.

Sometimes an angler comes, and drops his hook
Within its hidden depths, and 'gainst a tree
Leaning his rod, reads in some pleasant book,
Forgetting soon his pride of fishery;
And dreams, or falls asleep,
While curious fishes peep
About his nibbled bait, or scornfully
Dart off and rise and leap.

And sometimes a slow figure 'neath the trees,
In ancient-fashioned smock, with tottering care
Upon a staff propping his weary knees,
May by the pathway of the forest fare:
As from a buried day
Across the mind will stray
Some perishing mute shadow,—and unaware
He passeth on his way.

Else, he that wishes solitude is safe,
Whether he bathe at morning in the stream:
Or lead his love there when the hot hours chafe
The meadows, busy with a blurring steam;
Or watch, as fades the light,
The gibbous moon grow bright,
Until her magic rays dance in a dream,
And glorify the night.

Where is this bower beside the silver Thames?
O pool and flowery thickets, hear my vow!
O trees of freshest foliage and straight stems,
No sharer of my secret I allow:
Lest ere I come the while
Strange feet your shades defile;
Or lest the burly oarsman turn his prow
Within your guardian isle.

6

A WATER-PARTY

LET us, as by this verdant bank we float,
Search down the marge to find some shady pool
Where we may rest awhile and moor our boat,
And bathe our tired limbs in the waters cool.
Beneath the noonday sun,
Swiftly, O river, run!

Here is a mirror for Narcissus, see!
I cannot sound it, plumbing with my oar.
Lay the stern in beneath this bowering tree!
Now, stepping on this stump, we are ashore.
Guard, Hamadryades,
Our clothes laid by your trees!

How the birds warble in the woods! I pick
The waxen lilies, diving to the root.

But swim not far in the stream, the weeds grow
thick,
And hot on the bare head the sunbeams shoot.
Until our sport be done,
O merry birds, sing on!

If but to-night the sky be clear, the moon
Will serve us well, for she is near the full.
We shall row safely home; only too soon,—
So pleasant 'tis, whether we float or pull.
To guide us through the night,
O summer moon, shine bright!

7

THE DOWNS

O BOLD majestic downs, smooth, fair and lonely;
O still solitude, only matched in the skies:
Perilous in steep places,
Soft in the level races,
Where sweeping in phantom silence the cloudland flies;
With lovely undulation of fall and rise;
Entrenched with thickets thorned,
By delicate miniature dainty flowers adorned!

I climb your crown, and lo! a sight surprising
Of sea in front uprising, steep and wide:
And scattered ships ascending
To heaven, lost in the blending

Of distant blues, where water and sky divide,
Urging their engines against wind and tide,
And all so small and slow
They seem to be wearily pointing the way they would go.

The accumulated murmur of soft plashing,
Of waves on rocks dashing and searching the sands,
Takes my ear, in the veering
Baffled wind, as rearing
Upright at the cliff, to the gullies and rifts he stands;
And his conquering surges scour out over the lands;
While again at the foot of the downs
He masses his strength to recover the topmost crowns.

8

SPRING

ODE I

INVITATION TO THE COUNTRY

AGAIN with pleasant green
Has Spring renewed the wood,
And where the bare trunks stood
Are leafy arbours seen;
And back on budding boughs
Come birds, to court and pair,
Whose rival amorous vows
Amaze the scented air.

The freshets are unbound,
And leaping from the hill,
Their mossy banks refill
With streams of light and sound:
And scattered down the meads,
From hour to hour unfold
A thousand buds and beads
In stars and cups of gold.

Now hear, and see, and note,
The farms are all astir,
And every labourer
Has doffed his winter coat;
And how with specks of white
They dot the brown hillside,
Or jaunt and sing outright
As by their teams they stride.

They sing to feel the Sun
Regain his wanton strength;
To know the year at length
Rewards their labour done;
To see the rootless stake
They set bare in the ground,
Burst into leaf, and shake
Its grateful scent around.

Ah now an evil lot
Is his, who toils for gain,
Where crowded chimneys stain
The heavens his choice forgot;
'Tis on the blighted trees
That deck his garden dim,
And in the tainted breeze,
That sweet spring comes to him.

Far sooner I would choose
The life of brutes that bask,
Than set myself a task,
Which inborn powers refuse:
And rather far enjoy
The body, than invent
A duty, to destroy
The ease which nature sent;

And country life I praise,
And lead, because I find
The philosophic mind
Can take no middle ways;
She will not leave her love
To mix with men, her art
Is all to strive above
The crowd, or stand apart.

Thrice happy he, the rare
Prometheus, who can play
With hidden things, and lay
New realms of nature bare;
Whose venturous step has trod
Hell underfoot, and won
A crown from man and God
For all that he has done.—

That highest gift of all,
Since crabbèd fate did flood
My heart with sluggish blood,
I look not mine to call;
But, like a truant freed,
Fly to the woods, and claim
A pleasure for the deed
Of my inglorious name:

And am content, denied
The best, in choosing right;
For Nature can delight
Fancies unoccupied
With ecstasies so sweet
As none can even guess,
Who walk not with the feet
Of joy in idleness.

Then leave your joyless ways,
My friend, my joys to see.
The day you come shall be
The choice of chosen days:
You shall be lost, and learn
New being, and forget
The world, till your return
Shall bring your first regret.

9

SPRING

ODE II

REPLY

BEHOLD! the radiant Spring,
In splendour decked anew,
Down from her heaven of blue
Returns on sunlit wing:
The zephyrs of her train
In fleecy clouds disport,
And birds to greet her reign
Summon their silvan court.

And here in street and square
The prisoned trees contest
Her favour with the best,
To robe themselves full fair :
And forth their buds provoke,
Forgetting winter brown,
And all the mire and smoke
That wrapped the dingy town.

Now he that loves indeed
His pleasure must awake,
Lest any pleasure take
Its flight, and he not heed ;
For of his few short years
Another now invites
His hungry soul, and cheers
His life with new delights.

And who loves Nature more
Than he, whose painful art
Has taught and skilled his heart
To read her skill and lore ?
Whose spirit leaps more high,
Plucking the pale primrose,
Than his whose feet must fly
The pasture where it grows ?

One long in city pent
Forgets, or must complain :
But think not I can stain
My heaven with discontent ;
Nor wallow with that sad,
Backsliding herd, who cry
That Truth must make man bad,
And pleasure is a lie.

Rather while Reason lives
To mark me from the beast,
I'll teach her serve at least
To heal the wound she gives :
Nor need she strain her powers
Beyond a common flight,
To make the passing hours
Happy from morn till night.

Since health our toil rewards,
And strength is labour's prize,
I hate not, nor despise
The work my lot accords ;
Nor fret with fears unkind
The tender joys, that bless
My hard-won peace of mind,
In hours of idleness.

Then what charm company
Can give, know I,—if wine
Go round, or throats combine
To set dumb music free.
Or deep in wintertide
When winds without make moan,
I love my own fireside
Not least when most alone.

Then oft I turn the page
In which our country's name,
Spoiling the Greek of fame,
Shall sound in every age:
Or some Terentian play
Renew, whose excellent
Adjusted folds betray
How once Menander went.

Or if grave study suit
The yet unwearied brain,
Plato can teach again,
And Socrates dispute;
Till fancy in a dream
Confront their souls with mine,
Crowning the mind supreme,
And her delights divine.

While pleasure yet can be
Pleasant, and fancy sweet,
I bid all care retreat
From my philosophy;
Which, when I come to try
Your simpler life, will find,
I doubt not, joys to vie
With those I leave behind.

10

ELEGY

AMONG THE TOMBS

Sad, sombre place, beneath whose antique yews
I come, unquiet sorrows to control;
Amid thy silent mossgrown graves to muse
With my neglected solitary soul;
And to poetic sadness care confide,
Trusting sweet Melancholy for my guide:

They will not ask why in thy shades I stray,
Among the tombs finding my rare delight,
Beneath the sun at indolent noonday,
Or in the windy moon-enchanted night,
Who have once reined in their steeds at any shrine,
And given them water from the well divine.—

The orchards are all ripened, and the sun
Spots the deserted gleanings with decay;
The seeds are perfected: his work is done,
And Autumn lingers but to outsmile the May;
Bidding his tinted leaves glide, bidding clear
Unto clear skies the birds applaud the year.

Lo, here I sit, and to the world I call,
The world my solemn fancy leaves behind,
Come! pass within the inviolable wall,
Come pride, come pleasure, come distracted mind;
Within the fated refuge, hither, turn,
And learn your wisdom ere 'tis late to learn.

Come with me now, and taste the fount of tears;
For many eyes have sanctified this spot,
Where grief's unbroken lineage endears
The charm untimely Folly injures not,
And slays the intruding thoughts, that overleap
The simple fence its holiness doth keep.

Read the worn names of the forgotten dead,
Their pompous legends will no smile awake;
Even the vainglorious title o'er the head
Wins its pride pardon for its sorrow's sake;
And carven Loves scorn not their dusty prize,
Though fallen so far from tender sympathies.

Here where a mother laid her only son,
Here where a lover left his bride, below
The treasured names their own are added on
To those whom they have followed long ago:
Sealing the record of the tears they shed,
That 'where their treasure there their hearts are fled.'

Grandfather, father, son, and then again
Child, grandchild, and great-grandchild laid beneath,
Numbered in turn among the sons of men,
And gathered each one in his turn to death:
While he that occupies their house and name
To-day,—to-morrow too their grave shall claim.

And where are all their spirits? Ah! could we tell
The manner of our being when we die,
And see beyond the scene we know so well
The country that so much obscured doth lie!
With brightest visions our fond hopes repair,
Or crown our melancholy with despair;

From death, still death, still would a comfort come:
Since of this world the essential joy must fall
In all distributed, in each thing some,
In nothing all, and all complete in all;

Till pleasure, ageing to her full increase,
Puts on perfection, and is throned in peace.

Yea, sweetest peace, unsought-for, undesired,
Loathed and misnamed, 'tis thee I worship here:
Though in most black habiliments attired,
Thou art sweet peace, and thee I cannot fear.
Nay, were my last hope quenched, I here would sit
And praise the annihilation of the pit.

Nor quickly disenchanted will my feet
Back to the busy town return, but yet
Linger, ere I my loving friends would greet,
Or touch their hands, or share without regret
The warmth of that kind hearth, whose sacred ties
Only shall dim with tears my dying eyes.

II

DEJECTION

WHEREFORE to-night so full of care,
My soul, revolving hopeless strife,
Pointing at hindrance, and the bare
Painful escapes of fitful life?

Shaping the doom that may befall
By precedent of terror past:
By love dishonoured, and the call
Of friendship slighted at the last?

By treasured names, the little store
That memory out of wreck could save
Of loving hearts, that gone before
Call their old comrade to the grave?

O soul, be patient: thou shalt find
A little matter mend all this;
Some strain of music to thy mind,
Some praise for skill not spent amiss.

Again shall pleasure overflow
Thy cup with sweetness, thou shalt taste
Nothing but sweetness, and shalt grow
Half sad for sweetness run to waste.

O happy life! I hear thee sing,
O rare delight of mortal stuff!
I praise my days for all they bring,
Yet are they only not enough.

12

MORNING HYMN

O GOLDEN Sun, whose ray
My path illumineth:
Light of the circling day,
Whose night is birth and death:

That dost not stint the prime
Of wise and strong, nor stay
The changeful ordering time,
That brings their sure decay:

Though thou, the central sphere,
Dost seem to turn around
Thy creature world, and near
As father fond art found;

Thereon, as from above
To shine, and make rejoice
With beauty, life, and love,
The garden of thy choice,

To dress the jocund Spring
With bounteous promise gay
Of hotter months, that bring
The full perfected day;

To touch with richest gold
The ripe fruit, ere it fall;
And smile through cloud and cold
On Winter's funeral.

Now with resplendent flood
Gladden my waking eyes,
And stir my slothful blood
To joyous enterprise.

Arise, arise, as when
At first God said LIGHT BE!
That He might make us men
With eyes His light to see.

Scatter the clouds that hide
The face of heaven, and show
Where sweet Peace doth abide,
Where Truth and Beauty grow.

Awaken, cheer, adorn,
Invite, inspire, assure
The joys that praise thy morn,
The toil thy noons mature:

And soothe the eve of day,
That darkens back to death;
O golden Sun, whose ray
Our path illumineth!

13

I HAVE loved flowers that fade,
Within whose magic tents
Rich hues have marriage made
With sweet unmemoried scents:
A honeymoon delight,—
A joy of love at sight,
That ages in an hour:—
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs, that die
Before their charm is writ
Along a liquid sky
Trembling to welcome it.
Notes, that with pulse of fire
Proclaim the spirit's desire,
Then die, and are nowhere:—
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,
And wither as a bloom:
Fear not a flowery death,
Dread not an airy tomb!
Fly with delight, fly hence!
'Twas thine love's tender sense
To feast; now on thy bier
Beauty shall shed a tear.

SHORTER POEMS

BOOK III

TO

R. W. D.

BOOK III

I

O MY vague desires!
Ye lambent flames of the soul, her offspring fires:
That are my soul herself in pangs sublime
Rising and flying to heaven before her time:

What doth tempt you forth
To drown in the south or shiver in the frosty north?
What seek ye or find ye in your random flying,
Ever soaring aloft, soaring and dying?

Joy, the joy of flight!
They hide in the sun, they flare and dance in the night;

Gone up, gone out of sight: and ever again
Follow fresh tongues of fire, fresh pangs of pain.

Ah! they burn my soul,
The fires, devour my soul that once was whole:
She is scattered in fiery phantoms day by day,
But whither, whither? ay whither? away, away!

Could I but control
These vague desires, these leaping flames of the soul:
Could I but quench the fire: ah! could I stay
My soul that flieth, alas, and dieth away!

2

LONDON SNOW

WHEN men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,
  Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;
Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;
Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:
  Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;
Hiding difference, making unevenness even,
Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.
  All night it fell, and when full inches seven
It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,
The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;
  And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness
Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:
The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;
  The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;

No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,
And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.
Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,
They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze
Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snow-balling;
Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;
Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,
'O look at the trees!' they cried, 'O look at the trees!'
With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,
Following along the white deserted way,
A country company long dispersed asunder:
When now already the sun, in pale display
Standing by Paul's high dome, spread forth below
His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.
For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;
And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,
Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:
But even for them awhile no cares encumber
Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,
The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber
At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm they have broken.

3

THE VOICE OF NATURE

I STAND on the cliff and watch the veiled sun paling
A silver field afar in the mournful sea,
The scourge of the surf, and plaintive gulls sailing
At ease on the gale that smites the shuddering lea:
Whose smile severe and chaste
June never hath stirred to vanity, nor age defaced.
In lofty thought strive, O spirit, for ever:
In courage and strength pursue thine own endeavour.

Ah! if it were only for thee, thou restless ocean
Of waves that follow and roar, the sweep of the tides;
Wer 't only for thee, impetuous wind, whose motion
Precipitate all o'errides, and turns, nor abides:
For you sad birds and fair,
Or only for thee, bleak cliff, erect in the air;

Then well could I read wisdom in every feature,
O well should I understand the voice of Nature.

But far away, I think, in the Thames valley,
The silent river glides by flowery banks:
And birds sing sweetly in branches that arch an alley
Of cloistered trees, moss-grown in their ancient ranks:
Where if a light air stray,
'Tis laden with hum of bees and scent of may.
Love and peace be thine, O spirit, for ever:
Serve thy sweet desire: despise endeavour.

And if it were only for thee, entrancèd river,
That scarce dost rock the lily on her airy stem,
Or stir a wave to murmur, or a rush to quiver;
Wer't but for the woods, and summer asleep in them:
For you my bowers green,
My hedges of rose and woodbine, with walks between,
Then well could I read wisdom in every feature,
O well should I understand the voice of Nature.

4

ON A DEAD CHILD

PERFECT little body, without fault or stain on thee,
With promise of strength and manhood full and fair!
Though cold and stark and bare,
The bloom and the charm of life doth awhile remain on thee.

Thy mother's treasure wert thou;—alas! no longer
To visit her heart with wondrous joy; to be
Thy father's pride;—ah, he
Must gather his faith together, and his strength make stronger.

To me, as I move thee now in the last duty,
Dost thou with a turn or gesture anon respond;
Startling my fancy fond
With a chance attitude of the head, a freak of beauty.

Thy hand clasps, as 'twas wont, my finger, and holds it:
But the grasp is the clasp of Death, heartbreaking and stiff;
Yet feels to my hand as if
'Twas still thy will, thy pleasure and trust that enfolds it.

So I lay thee there, thy sunken eyelids closing,—
Go lie thou there in thy coffin, thy last little bed!—
Propping thy wise, sad head,
Thy firm, pale hands across thy chest disposing.

So quiet! doth the change content thee?—Death, whither hath he taken thee?
To a world, do I think, that rights the disaster of this?
The vision of which I miss,
Who weep for the body, and wish but to warm thee and awaken thee?

Ah! little at best can all our hopes avail us
To lift this sorrow, or cheer us, when in the dark,
Unwilling, alone we embark,
And the things we have seen and have known and have heard of, fail us.

5

THE PHILOSOPHER TO HIS MISTRESS

Because thou canst not see,
Because thou canst not know
The black and hopeless woe
That hath encompassed me:
Because, should I confess
The thought of my despair,
My words would wound thee less
Than swords can hurt the air:

Because with thee I seem
As one invited near
To taste the faery cheer
Of spirits in a dream;
Of whom he knoweth nought
Save that they vie to make
All motion, voice and thought
A pleasure for his sake:

Therefore more sweet and strange
Has been the mystery
Of thy long love to me,
That doth not quit, nor change,
Nor tax my solemn heart,
That kisseth in a gloom,
Knowing not who thou art
That givest, nor to whom.

Therefore the tender touch
Is more; more dear the smile:
And thy light words beguile
My wisdom overmuch:
And O with swiftness fly
The fancies of my song
To happy worlds, where I
Still in thy love belong.

6

HASTE on, my joys! your treasure lies
In swift, unceasing flight.
O haste: for while your beauty flies
I seize your full delight.
Lo! I have seen the scented flower,
Whose tender stems I cull,
For her brief date and meted hour
Appear more beautiful.

O youth, O strength, O most divine
For that so short ye prove;
Were but your rare gifts longer mine,
Ye scarce would win my love.
Nay, life itself the heart would spurn,
Did once the days restore
The days, that once enjoyed return,
Return—ah! nevermore.

7

INDOLENCE

We left the city when the summer day
Had verged already on its hot decline,
And charmèd Indolence in languor lay
In her gay gardens, 'neath her towers divine:
'Farewell,' we said, 'dear city of youth and dream!'
And in our boat we stepped and took the stream.

All through that idle afternoon we strayed
Upon our proposed travel well begun,
As loitering by the woodland's dreamy shade,
Past shallow islets floating in the sun,
Or searching down the banks for rarer flowers
We lingered out the pleasurable hours.

Till when that loveliest came, which mowers home
Turns from their longest labour, as we steered
Along a straitened channel flecked with foam,
We lost our landscape wide, and slowly neared

An ancient bridge, that like a blind wall lay
Low on its buried vaults to block the way.

Then soon the narrow tunnels broader showed,
Where with its arches three it sucked the mass
Of water, that in swirl thereunder flowed,
Or stood piled at the piers waiting to pass;
And pulling for the middle span, we drew
The tender blades aboard and floated through.

But past the bridge what change we found below!
The stream, that all day long had laughed and played
Betwixt the happy shires, ran dark and slow,
And with its easy flood no murmur made:
And weeds spread on its surface, and about
The stagnant margin reared their stout heads out.

Upon the left high elms, with giant wood
Skirting the water-meadows, interwove
Their slumbrous crowns, o'ershadowing where they stood
The floor and heavy pillars of the grove:
And in the shade, through reeds and sedges dank,
A footpath led along the moated bank.

Across, all down the right, an old brick wall,
Above and o'er the channel, red did lean;

Here buttressed up, and bulging there to fall,
Tufted with grass and plants and lichen green;
And crumbling to the flood, which at its base
Slid gently nor disturbed its mirrored face.

Sheer on the wall the houses rose, their backs
All windowless, neglected and awry,
With tottering coins, and crooked chimney stacks;
And here and there an unused door, set high
Above the fragments of its mouldering stair,
With rail and broken step led out on air.

Beyond, deserted wharfs and vacant sheds,
With empty boats and barges moored along,
And rafts half-sunken, fringed with weedy shreds,
And sodden beams, once soaked to season strong.
No sight of man, nor sight of life, no stroke,
No voice the somnolence and silence broke.

Then I who rowed leant on my oar, whose drip
Fell without sparkle, and I rowed no more;
And he that steered moved neither hand nor lip,
But turned his wondering eye from shore to shore;
And our trim boat let her swift motion die,
Between the dim reflections floating by.

8

I PRAISE the tender flower,
That on a mournful day
Bloomed in my garden bower
And made the winter gay.
Its loveliness contented
My heart tormented.

I praise the gentle maid
Whose happy voice and smile
To confidence betrayed
My doleful heart awhile:
And gave my spirit deploring
Fresh wings for soaring.

The maid for very fear
Of love I durst not tell:

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The rose could never hear,
Though I bespake her well:
So in my song I bind them
For all to find them.

9

A WINTER'S night with the snow about:
'Twas silent within and cold without:
Both father and mother to bed were gone:
The son sat yet by the fire alone.

He gazed on the fire, and dreamed again
Of one that was now no more among men:
As still he sat and never aware
How close was the spirit beside his chair.

Nay, sad were his thoughts, for he wept and said
Ah, woe for the dead! ah, woe for the dead!
How heavy the earth lies now on her breast,
The lips that I kissed, and the hand I pressed.

The spirit he saw not, he could not hear
The comforting word she spake in his ear :
His heart in the grave with her mouldering clay
No welcome gave—and she fled away.

10

My bed and pillow are cold,
My heart is faint with dread,
The air hath an odour of mould,
I dream I lie with the dead:
I cannot move,
O come to me, love,
Or else I am dead.

The feet I hear on the floor
Tread heavily overhead:
O Love, come down to the door,
Come, Love, come, ere I be dead:
Make shine thy light,
O Love, in the night;
Or else I am dead.

II

O THOU unfaithful, still as ever dearest,
That in thy beauty to my eyes appearest,
In fancy rising now to re-awaken
My love unshaken;

All thou 'st forgotten, but no change can free thee,
No hate unmake thee; as thou wert I see thee,
And am contented, eye from fond eye meeting
Its ample greeting.

O thou my star of stars, among things wholly
Devoted, sacred, dim and melancholy,
The only joy of all the joys I cherished
That hast not perished,

Why now on others squand'rest thou the treasure,
That to be jealous of is still my pleasure:
As still I dream 'tis me whom thou invitest,
Me thou delightest?

But day by day my joy hath feebler being,
The fading picture tires my painful seeing,
And faery fancy leaves her habitation
To desolation.

Of two things open left for lovers parted
'Twas thine to scorn the past and go lighthearted:
But I would ever dream I still possess it,
And thus caress it.

12

Thou didst delight my eyes:
Yet who am I? nor first
Nor last nor best, that durst
Once dream of thee for prize;
Nor this the only time
Thou shalt set love to rhyme.

Thou didst delight my ear:
Ah! little praise; thy voice
Makes other hearts rejoice,
Makes all ears glad that hear;
And short my joy: but yet,
O song, do not forget.

For what wert thou to me?
How shall I say? The moon,

That poured her midnight noon
Upon his wrecking sea;—
A sail, that for a day
Has cheered the castaway.

13

Joy, sweetest lifeborn joy, where dost thou dwell?
Upon the formless moments of our being
Flitting, to mock the ear that heareth well,
To escape the trainèd eye that strains in seeing,
Dost thou fly with us whither we are fleeing;
Or home in our creations, to withstand
Blackwingèd death, that slays the making hand?

The making mind, that must untimely perish
Amidst its work which time may not destroy,
The beauteous forms which man shall love to cherish,
The glorious songs that combat earth's annoy?
Thou dost dwell here, I know, divinest Joy:
But they who build thy towers fair and strong,
Of all that toil, feel most of care and wrong.

Sense is so tender, O and hope so high,
That common pleasures mock their hope and sense;
And swifter than doth lightning from the sky
The ecstasy they pine for flashes hence,
Leaving the darkness and the woe immense,
Wherewith it seems no thread of life was woven,
Nor doth the track remain where once 'twas cloven.

And heaven and all the stable elements
That guard God's purpose mock us, though the mind
Be spent in searching: for his old intents
We see were never for our joy designed:
They shine as doth the bright sun on the blind,
Or like his pensioned stars, that hymn above
His praise, but not toward us, that God is Love.

For who so well hath wooed the maiden hours
As quite to have won the worth of their rich show,
To rob the night of mystery, or the flowers
Of their sweet delicacy ere they go?
Nay, even the dear occasion when we know,
We miss the joy, and on the gliding day
The special glories float and pass away.

Only life's common plod: still to repair
The body and the thing which perisheth:
The soil, the smutch, the toil and ache and wear,
The grinding enginry of blood and breath,
Pain's random darts, the heartless spade of death;
All is but grief, and heavily we call
On the last terror for the end of all.

Then comes the happy moment: not a stir
In any tree, no portent in the sky:
The morn doth neither hasten nor defer,
The morrow hath no name to call it by,
But life and joy are one,—we know not why,—
As though our very blood long breathless lain
Had tasted of the breath of God again.

And having tasted it I speak of it,
And praise him thinking how I trembled then
When his touch strengthened me, as now I sit
In wonder, reaching out beyond my ken,
Reaching to turn the day back, and my pen
Urging to tell a tale which told would seem
The witless phantasy of them that dream.

But O most blessèd truth, for truth thou art,
Abide thou with me till my life shall end.
Divinity hath surely touched my heart;
I have possessed more joy than earth can lend:
I may attain what time shall never spend.
Only let not my duller days destroy
The memory of thy witness and my joy.

14

THE full moon from her cloudless skies
Turneth her face, I think, on me;
And from the hour when she doth rise
Till when she sets, none else will see.

One only other ray she hath,
That makes an angle close with mine,
And glancing down its happy path
Upon another spot doth shine.

But that ray too is sent to me,
For where it lights there dwells my heart:
And if I were where I would be,
Both rays would shine, love, where thou art.

15

Awake, my heart, to be loved, awake, awake!
The darkness silvers away, the morn doth break,
It leaps in the sky: unrisen lustres slake
The o'ertaken moon. Awake, O heart, awake!

She too that loveth awaketh and hopes for thee;
Her eyes already have sped the shades that flee,
Already they watch the path thy feet shall take:
Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

And if thou tarry from her,—if this could be,—
She cometh herself, O heart, to be loved, to thee;
For thee would unashamèd herself forsake:
Awake to be loved, my heart, awake, awake!

Awake, the land is scattered with light, and see,
Uncanopied sleep is flying from field and tree:

And blossoming boughs of April in laughter shake;
Awake, O heart, to be loved, awake, awake!

Lo all things wake and tarry and look for thee:
She looketh and saith, 'O sun, now bring him to me.
Come more adored, O adored, for his coming's sake,
And awake my heart to be loved: awake, awake!'

16

SONG

I LOVE my lady's eyes
Above the beauties rare
She most is wont to prize,
Above her sunny hair,
And all that face to face
Her glass repeats of grace.

For those are still the same
To her and all that see:
But oh! her eyes will flame
When they do look on me:
And so above the rest
I love her eyes the best.

Now say, [*Say, O say! saith the music*]
who likes my song?—
I knew you by your eyes,
That rest on nothing long,
And have forgot surprise;
And stray [*Stray, O stray! saith the music*]
as mine will stray,
The while my love's away.

17

Since thou, O fondest and truest,
Hast loved me best and longest,
And now with trust the strongest
The joy of my heart renewest;

Since thou art dearer and dearer
While other hearts grow colder,
And ever, as love is older,
More lovingly drawest nearer:

Since now I see in the measure
Of all my giving and taking,
Thou wert my hand in the making,
The sense and soul of my pleasure;

The good I have ne'er repaid thee
In heaven I pray be recorded,
And all thy love rewarded
By God, thy master that made thee.

18

THE evening darkens over.
After a day so bright
The windcapt waves discover
That wild will be the night.
There's sound of distant thunder.

The latest sea-birds hover
Along the cliff's sheer height;
As in the memory wander
Last flutterings of delight,
White wings lost on the white.

There's not a ship in sight;
And as the sun goes under
Thick clouds conspire to cover
The moon that should rise yonder.
Thou art alone, fond lover.

19

O YOUTH whose hope is high,
Who dost to Truth aspire,
Whether thou live or die,
O look not back nor tire.

Thou that art bold to fly
Through tempest, flood and fire,
Nor dost not shrink to try
Thy heart in torments dire:

If thou canst Death defy,
If thy Faith is entire,
Press onward, for thine eye
Shall see thy heart's desire.

Beauty and love are nigh,
And with their deathless quire
Soon shall thine eager cry
Be numbered and expire.

SHORTER POEMS

BOOK IV

TO

L. B. C. L. M.

BOOK IV

I

I LOVE all beauteous things,
I seek and adore them;
God hath no better praise,
And man in his hasty days
Is honoured for them.

I too will something make
And joy in the making;
Altho' to-morrow it seem
Like the empty words of a dream
Remembered on waking.

2

My spirit sang all day
  O my joy.
Nothing my tongue could say,
  Only My joy!

My heart an echo caught—
  O my joy—
And spake, Tell me thy thought,
  Hide not thy joy.

My eyes gan peer around,—
  O my joy—
What beauty hast thou found?
  Shew us thy joy.

My jealous ears grew whist;—
  O my joy—
Music from heaven is 't,
  Sent for our joy?

She also came and heard;
O my joy,
What, said she, is this word?
What is thy joy?

And I replied, O see,
O my joy,
'Tis thee, I cried, 'tis thee:
Thou art my joy.

3

THE upper skies are palest blue
Mottled with pearl and fretted snow:
With tattered fleece of inky hue
Close overhead the stormclouds go.

Their shadows fly along the hill
And o'er the crest mount one by one:
The whitened planking of the mill
Is now in shade and now in sun.

4

THE clouds have left the sky,
The wind hath left the sea,
The half-moon up on high
Shrinketh her face of dree.

She lightens on the comb
Of leaden waves, that roar
And thrust their hurried foam
Up on the dusky shore.

Behind the western bars
The shrouded day retreats,
And unperceived the stars
Steal to their sovran seats.

And whiter grows the foam,
The small moon lightens more;
And as I turn me home,
My shadow walks before.

5

LAST WEEK OF FEBRUARY, 1890

HARK to the merry birds, hark how they sing!
Although 'tis not yet spring
And keen the air;
Hale Winter, half resigning ere he go,
Doth to his heiress shew
His kingdom fair.

In patient russet is his forest spread,
All bright with bramble red,
With beechen moss
And holly sheen: the oak silver and stark
Sunneth his aged bark
And wrinkled boss.

But neath the ruin of the withered brake
Primroses now awake
From nursing shades:

The crumpled carpet of the dry leaves brown
Avails not to keep down
The hyacinth blades.

The hazel hath put forth his tassels ruffed;
The willow's flossy tuft
Hath slipped him free:
The rose amid her ransacked orange hips
Braggeth the tender tips
Of bowers to be.

A black rook stirs the branches here and there,
Foraging to repair
His broken home:
And hark, on the ash-boughs! Never thrush did sing
Louder in praise of spring,
When spring is come.

6

APRIL, 1885

WANTON with long delay the gay spring leaping
cometh;
The blackthorn starreth now his bough on the eve
of May:
All day in the sweet box-tree the bee for pleasure
hummeth:
The cuckoo sends afloat his note on the air all day.

Now dewy nights again and rain in gentle shower
At root of tree and flower have quenched the winter's
drouth:
On high the hot sun smiles, and banks of cloud up-
tower
In bulging heads that crowd for miles the dazzling
south.

7

Gáy Róbin is seen no more:
He is gone with the snow,
For winter is o'er
And Robin will go.
In need he was fed, and now he is fled
Away to his secret nest.
No more will he stand
Begging for crumbs,
No longer he comes
Beseeching our hand
And showing his breast
At window and door:—
Gay Robin is seen no more.

Blithe Robin is heard no more:
He gave us his song
When summer was o'er
And winter was long:

He sang for his bread and now he is fled
Away to his secret nest.
And there in the green
Early and late
Alone to his mate
He pipeth unseen
And swelleth his breast;
For us it is o'er:—
Blithe Robin is heard no more.

8

SPRING goeth all in white,
Crowned with milk-white may:
In fleecy flocks of light
O'er heaven the white clouds stray:

White butterflies in the air;
White daisies prank the ground:
The cherry and hoary pear
Scatter their snow around.

9

Mʏ eyes for beauty pine,
My soul for Goddës grace:
No other care nor hope is mine;
To heaven I turn my face.

One splendour thence is shed
From all the stars above:
'Tis namèd when God's name is said,
'Tis Love, 'tis heavenly Love.

And every gentle heart,
That burns with true desire,
Is lit from eyes that mirror part
Of that celestial fire.

10

O Love, my muse, how was 't for me
Among the best to dare,
In thy high courts that bowed the knee
With sacrifice and prayer?

Their mighty offerings at thy shrine
Shamed me, who nothing bore:
Their suits were mockeries of mine,
I sued for so much more.

Full many I met that crowned with bay
In triumph home returned,
And many a master on the way
Proud of the prize I scorned.

I wished no garland on my head
Nor treasure in my hand;
My gift the longing that me led,
My prayer thy high command,

My love, my muse; and when I spake
Thou mad'st me thine that day,
And more than hundred hearts could take
Gav'st me to bear away.

II

Love on my heart from heaven fell,
Soft as the dew on flowers of spring,
Sweet as the hidden drops that swell
Their honey-throated chalicing.

Now never from him do I part,
Hosanna evermore I cry:
I taste his savour in my heart,
And bid all praise him as do I.

Without him noughtsoever is,
Nor was afore, nor e'er shall be:
Nor any other joy than his
Wish I for mine to comfort me.

12

THE hill pines were sighing,
O'ercast and chill was the day :
A mist in the valley lying
Blotted the pleasant May.

But deep in the glen's bosom
Summer slept in the fire
Of the odorous gorse-blossom
And the hot scent of the brier.

A ribald cuckoo clamoured,
And out of the copse the stroke
Of the iron axe that hammered
The iron heart of the oak.

Anon a sound appalling,
As a hundred years of pride
Crashed, in the silence falling :
And the shadowy pine-trees sighed.

13

THE WINDMILL

THE green corn waving in the dale,
The ripe grass waving on the hill:
I lean across the paddock pale
And gaze upon the giddy mill.

Its hurtling sails a mighty sweep
Cut thro' the air: with rushing sound
Each strikes in fury down the steep,
Rattles, and whirls in chase around.

Beside his sacks the miller stands
On high within the open door:
A book and pencil in his hands,
His grist and meal he reckoneth o'er.

His tireless merry slave the wind
Is busy with his work to-day:
From whencesoe'er, he comes to grind;
He hath a will and knows the way.

He gives the creaking sails a spin,
The circling millstones faster flee,
The shuddering timbers groan within,
And down the shoot the meal runs free.

The miller giveth him no thanks,
And doth not much his work o'erlook:
He stands beside the sacks, and ranks
The figures in his dusty book.

14

When June is come, then all the day
I'll sit with my love in the scented hay:
And watch the sunshot palaces high,
That the white clouds build in the breezy sky.

She singeth, and I do make her a song,
And read sweet poems the whole day long:
Unseen as we lie in our haybuilt home.
O life is delight when June is come.

15

The pinks along my garden walks
Have all shot forth their summer stalks,
Thronging their buds 'mong tulips hot,
And blue forget-me-not.

Their dazzling snows forth-bursting soon
Will lade the idle breath of June:
And waken thro' the fragrant night
To steal the pale moonlight.

The nightingale at end of May
Lingers each year for their display;
Till when he sees their blossoms blown,
He knows the spring is flown.

June's birth they greet, and when their bloom
Dislustres, withering on his tomb,
Then summer hath a shortening day;
And steps slow to decay.

16

Fire of heaven, whose starry arrow
Pierces the veil of timeless night:
Molten spheres, whose tempests narrow
Their floods to a beam of gentle light,
To charm with a moon-ray quenched from fire
The land of delight, the land of desire!

Smile of love, a flower planted,
Sprung in the garden of joy that art:
Eyes that shine with a glow enchanted,
Whose spreading fires encircle my heart,
And warm with a noon-ray drenched in fire
My land of delight, my land of desire!

17

THE idle life I lead
Is like a pleasant sleep,
Wherein I rest and heed
The dreams that by me sweep.

And still of all my dreams
In turn so swiftly past,
Each in its fancy seems
A nobler than the last.

And every eve I say,
Noting my step in bliss,
That I have known no day
In all my life like this.

18

ANGEL spirits of sleep,
White-robed, with silver hair,
In your meadows fair,
Where the willows weep,
And the sad moonbeam
On the gliding stream
Writes her scattered dream:

Angel spirits of sleep,
Dancing to the weir
In the hollow roar
Of its waters deep;
Know ye how men say
That ye haunt no more
Isle and grassy shore
With your moonlit play;

That ye dance not here,
White-robed spirits of sleep,
All the summer night
Threading dances light?

19

ANNIVERSARY

WHAT is sweeter than new-mown hay,
Fresher than winds o'er-sea that blow,
Innocent above children's play,
Fairer and purer than winter snow,
Frolic as are the morns of May?
—If it should be what best I know!

What is richer than thoughts that stray
From reading of poems that smoothly flow?
What is solemn like the delay
Of concords linked in a music slow
Dying thro' vaulted aisles away?
—If it should be what best I know!

What gives faith to me when I pray,
Setteth my heart with joy aglow,
Filleth my song with fancies gay,

Maketh the heaven to which I go,
The gladness of earth that lasteth for aye?
—If it should be what best I know!

But tell me thou—'twas on this day
That first we loved five years ago—
If 'tis a thing that I can say,
Though it must be what best we know.

20

THE summer trees are tempest-torn,
The hills are wrapped in a mantle wide
Of folding rain by the mad wind borne
Across the country side.

His scourge of fury is lashing down
The delicate-rankèd golden corn,
That never more shall rear its crown
And curtsey to the morn.

There shews no care in heaven to save
Man's pitiful patience, or provide
A season for the season's slave,
Whose trust hath toiled and died.

So my proud spirit in me is sad,
A wreck of fairer fields to mourn,
The ruin of golden hopes she had,
My delicate-rankèd corn.

21

THE birds that sing on autumn eves
Among the golden-tinted leaves,
Are but the few that true remain
Of budding May's rejoicing train.

Like autumn flowers that brave the frost,
And make their show when hope is lost,
These 'mong the fruits and mellow scent
Mourn not the high-sunned summer spent.

Their notes thro' all the jocund spring
Were mixed in merry musicking:
They sang for love the whole day long,
But now their love is all for song.

Now each hath perfected his lay
To praise the year that hastes away:
They sit on boughs apart, and vie
In single songs and rich reply:

And oft as in the copse I hear
These anthems of the dying year,
The passions, once her peace that stole,
With flattering love my heart console.

22

WHEN my love was away,
Full three days were not sped,
I caught my fancy astray
Thinking if she were dead,

And I alone, alone:
It seemed in my misery
In all the world was none
Ever so lone as I.

I wept; but it did not shame
Nor comfort my heart: away
I rode as I might, and came
To my love at close of day.

The sight of her stilled my fears,
My fairest-hearted love:
And yet in her eyes were tears:
Which when I questioned of,

O now thou art come, she cried,
'Tis fled: but I thought to-day
I never could here abide,
If thou wert longer away.

23

THE storm is over, the land hushes to rest:
The tyrannous wind, its strength fordone,
Is fallen back in the west
To couch with the sinking sun.
The last clouds fare
With fainting speed, and their thin streamers fly
In melting drifts of the sky.
Already the birds in the air
Appear again; the rooks return to their haunt,
And one by one,
Proclaiming aloud their care,
Renew their peaceful chant.

Torn and shattered the trees their branches again
reset,
They trim afresh the fair
Few green and golden leaves withheld from the
storm,
And awhile will be handsome yet.

To-morrow's sun shall caress
Their remnant of loveliness:
In quiet days for a time
Sad Autumn lingering warm
Shall humour their faded prime.

But ah! the leaves of summer that lie on the ground!
What havoc! The laughing timbrels of June,
That curtained the birds' cradles, and screened their song,
That sheltered the cooing doves at noon,
Of airy fans the delicate throng,—
Torn and scattered around:
Far out afield they lie,
In the watery furrows die,
In grassy pools of the flood they sink and drown,
Green-golden, orange, vermilion, golden and brown,
The high year's flaunting crown
Shattered and trampled down.

The day is done: the tired land looks for night:
She prays to the night to keep
In peace her nerves of delight:
While silver mist upstealeth silently,
And the broad cloud-driving moon in the clear sky
Lifts o'er the firs her shining shield,

And in her tranquil light
Sleep falls on forest and field.
Sée! sléep hath fallen: the trees are asleep:
The night is come. The land is wrapt in sleep.

24

Ye thrilled me once, ye mournful strains,
Ye anthems of plaintive woe,
My spirit was sad when I was young;
Ah sorrowful long-ago!
But since I have found the beauty of joy
I have done with proud dismay:
For howsoe'er man hug his care
The best of his art is gay.

And yet if voices of fancy's choir
Again in mine ear awake
Your old lament, 'tis dear to me still,
Nor all for memory's sake:
'Tis like the dirge of sorrow dead,
Whose tears are wiped away;
Or drops of the shower when rain is o'er,
That jewel the brightened day.

25

Say who is this with silvered hair,
So pale and worn and thin,
Who passeth here, and passeth there,
And looketh out and in?

That useth not our garb nor tongue,
And knoweth things untold:
Who teacheth pleasure to the young,
And wisdom to the old?

No toil he maketh his by day,
No home his own by night;
But wheresoe'er he take his way,
He killeth our delight.

Since he is come there 's nothing wise
Nor fair in man or child,
Unless his deep divining eyes
Have looked on it and smiled.

Whence came he hither all alone
  Among our folk to spy?
There's nought that we can call our own,
  Till he shall hap to die.

And I would dig his grave full deep
  Beneath the churchyard yew,
Lest thence his wizard eyes might peep
  To mark the things we do.

26

Crown Winter with green,
And give him good drink
To physic his spleen
Or ever he think.

His mouth to the bowl,
His feet to the fire;
And let him, good soul,
No comfort desire.

So merry he be,
I bid him abide:
And merry be we
This good Yuletide.

27

THE snow lies sprinkled on the beach,
And whitens all the marshy lea:
The sad gulls wail adown the gale,
The day is dark and black the sea.
  Shorn of their crests the blighted waves
With driven foam the offing fleck:
The ebb is low and barely laves
The red rust of the giant wreck.

On such a stony, breaking beach
My childhood chanced and chose to be:
'Twas here I played, and musing made
My friend the melancholy sea.
  He from his dim enchanted caves
With shuddering roar and onrush wild
Fell down in sacrificial waves
At feet of his exulting child.

Unto a spirit too light for fear
His wrath was mirth, his wail was glee :—
My heart is now too fixed to bow
Tho' all his tempests howl at me :
  For to the gain life's summer saves,
My solemn joy's increasing store,
The tossing of his mournful waves
Makes sweetest music evermore.

28

My spirit kisseth thine,
My spirit embraceth thee:
I feel thy being twine
Her graces over me,

In the life-kindling fold
Of God's breath; where on high,
In furthest space untold
Like a lost world I lie:

And o'er my dreaming plains
Lightens, most pale and fair,
A moon that never wanes;
Or more, if I compare,

Like what the shepherd sees
On late mid-winter dawns,
When thro' the branchèd trees,
O'er the white-frosted lawns,

The huge unclouded sun,
Surprising the world whist,
Is all uprisen thereon,
Golden with melting mist.

29

ARIEL, O,—my angel, my own,—
Whither away then art thou flown
  Beyond my spirit's dominion?
That makest my heart run over with rhyme,
Renewing at will my youth for a time,
  My servant, my pretty minion.

Now indeed I have cause to mourn,
Now thou returnest scorn for scorn:
  Leave me not to my folly:
For when thou art with me is none so gay
As I, and none when thou'rt away
  Was ever so melancholy.

30

LAUS DEO

Let praise devote thy work, and skill employ
Thy whole mind, and thy heart be lost in joy.
Well-doing bringeth pride, this constant thought
Humility, that thy best done is nought.
Man doeth nothing well, be it great or small,
Save to praise God; but that hath savèd all:
For God requires no more than thou hast done,
And takes thy work to bless it for his own.

SHORTER POEMS

BOOK V

TO

M. G. K.

BOOK V

I

THE WINNOWERS

BETWIXT two billows of the downs
The little hamlet lies,
And nothing sees but the bald crowns
Of the hills, and the blue skies.

Clustering beneath the long descent
And grey slopes of the wold,
The red roofs nestle, overspent
With lichen yellow as gold.

We found it in the mid-day sun
  Basking, what time of year
The thrush his singing has begun,
  Ere the first leaves appear.

High from his load a woodman pitched
  His faggots on the stack:
Knee-deep in straw the cattle twitched
  Sweet hay from crib and rack:

And from the barn hard by was borne
  A steady muffled din,
By which we knew that threshèd corn
  Was winnowing, and went in.

The sunbeams on the motey air
  Streamed through the open door,
And on the brown arms moving bare,
  And the grain upon the floor.

One turns the crank, one stoops to feed
  The hopper, lest it lack,
One in the bushel scoops the seed,
  One stands to hold the sack.

We watched the good grain rattle down,
And the awns fly in the draught;
To see us both so pensive grown
The honest labourers laughed:

Merry they were, because the wheat
Was clean and plump and good,
Pleasant to hand and eye, and meet
For market and for food.

It chanced we from the city were,
And had not gat us free
In spirit from the store and stir
Of its immensity:

But here we found ourselves again.
Where humble harvests bring
After much toil but little grain,
'Tis merry winnowing.

2

THE AFFLICTION OF RICHARD

Love not too much. But how,
When thou hast made me such,
And dost thy gifts bestow,
How can I love too much?
Though I must fear to lose,
And drown my joy in care,
With all its thorns I choose
The path of love and prayer.

Though thou, I know not why,
Didst kill my childish trust,
That breach with toil did I
Repair, because I must:
And spite of frighting schemes,
With which the fiends of Hell
Blaspheme thee in my dreams,
So far I have hoped well.

But what the heavenly key,
What marvel in me wrought
Shall quite exculpate thee,
I have no shadow of thought.
What am I that complain?
The love, from which began
My question sad and vain,
Justifies thee to man.

3

Since to be loved endures,
To love is wise:
Earth hath no good but yours,
Brave, joyful eyes:

Earth hath no sin but thine,
Dull eye of scorn:
O'er thee the sun doth pine
And angels mourn.

4

THE GARDEN IN SEPTEMBER

Now thin mists temper the slow-ripening beams
Of the September sun: his golden gleams
On gaudy flowers shine, that prank the rows
Of high-grown hollyhocks, and all tall shows
That Autumn flaunteth in his bushy bowers;
Where tomtits, hanging from the drooping heads
Of giant sunflowers, peck the nutty seeds;
And in the feathery aster bees on wing
Seize and set free the honied flowers,
Till thousand stars leap with their visiting:
While ever across the path mazily flit,
Unpiloted in the sun,
The dreamy butterflies
With dazzling colours powdered and soft glooms,
White, black and crimson stripes, and peacock eyes,
Or on chance flowers sit,

With idle effort plundering one by one
The nectaries of deepest-throated blooms.

With gentle flaws the western breeze
Into the garden saileth,
Scarce here and there stirring the single trees,
For his sharpness he waileth:
So long a comrade of the bearded corn,
Now from the stubbles whence the shocks are borne,
O'er dewy lawns he turns to stray,
As mindful of the kisses and soft play
Wherewith he enamoured the light-hearted May,
Ere he deserted her;
Lover of fragrance, and too late repents;
Nor more of heavy hyacinth now may drink,
Nor spicy pink,
Nor summer's rose, nor garnered lavender,
But the few lingering scents
Of streakèd pea, and gillyflower, and stocks
Of courtly purple, and aromatic phlox.

And at all times to hear are drowsy tones
Of dizzy flies, and humming drones,
With sudden flap of pigeon wings in the sky,
Or the wild cry
Of thirsty rooks, that scour ascare

The distant blue, to watering as they fare
With creaking pinions, or—on business bent,
If aught their ancient polity displease,—
Come gathering to their colony, and there
Settling in ragged parliament,
Some stormy council hold in the high trees.

5

So sweet love seemed that April morn,
When first we kissed beside the thorn,
So strangely sweet, it was not strange
We thought that love could never change.

But I can tell—let truth be told—
That love will change in growing old;
Though day by day is nought to see,
So delicate his motions be.

And in the end 'twill come to pass
Quite to forget what once he was,
Nor even in fancy to recall
The pleasure that was all in all.

His little spring, that sweet we found,
So deep in summer floods is drowned,
I wonder, bathed in joy complete,
How love so young could be so sweet.

6

LARKS

What voice of gladness, hark!
In heaven is ringing?
From the sad fields the lark
Is upward winging.

High through the mournful mist that blots our day
Their songs betray them soaring in the grey.
See them! Nay, they
In sunlight swim; above the furthest stain
Of cloud attain; their hearts in music rain
Upon the plain.

Sweet birds, far out of sight
Your songs of pleasure
Dome us with joy as bright
As heaven's best azure.

7

THE PALM WILLOW

See, whirling snow sprinkles the starvèd fields,
The birds have stayed to sing;
No covert yet their fairy harbour yields.
When cometh Spring?
Ah! in their tiny throats what songs unborn
Are quenched each morn.

The lenten lilies, through the frost that push,
Their yellow heads withhold:
The woodland willow stands a lonely bush
Of nebulous gold;
There the Spring-goddess cowers in faint attire
Of frightened fire.

8

ASIAN BIRDS

In this May-month, by grace
of heaven, things shoot apace.
The waiting multitude
of fair boughs in the wood,
How few days have arrayed
their beauty in green shade

What have I seen or heard?
it was the yellow bird
Sang in the tree: he flew
a flame against the blue;
Upward he flashed. Again,
hark! 'tis his heavenly strain.

Another! Hush! Behold,
many, like boats of gold,

From waving branch to branch
their airy bodies launch.
What music is like this,
where each note is a kiss?

The golden willows lift
their boughs the sun to sift:
Their sprays they droop to screen
the sky with veils of green,
A floating cage of song,
where feathered lovers throng.

How the delicious notes
come bubbling from their throats!
Full and sweet how they are shed
like round pearls from a thread!
The motions of their flight
are wishes of delight.

Hearing their song I trace
the secret of their grace.
Ah, could I this fair time
so fashion into rhyme,
The poem that I sing
would be the voice of spring.

9

JANUARY

Cold is the winter day, misty and dark:
The sunless sky with faded gleams is rent;
And patches of thin snow outlying, mark
The landscape with a drear disfigurement.

The trees their mournful branches lift aloft:
The oak with knotty twigs is full of trust,
With bud-thronged bough the cherry in the croft;
The chestnut holds her gluey knops upthrust.

No birds sing, but the starling chaps his bill
And chatters mockingly; the newborn lambs
Within their strawbuilt fold beneath the hill
Answer with plaintive cry their bleating dams.

Their voices melt in welcome dreams of spring,
  Green grass and leafy trees and sunny skies:
My fancy decks the woods, the thrushes sing,
  Meadows are gay, bees hum and scents arise.

And God the Maker doth my heart grow bold
  To praise for wintry works not understood,
Who all the worlds and ages doth behold,
  Evil and good as one, and all as good.

10

A ROBIN

FLAME-THROATED robin on the topmost bough
Of the leafless oak, what singest thou?
Hark! he telleth how—
'Spring is coming now; Spring is coming now.

Now ruddy are the elm-tops against the blue sky,
The pale larch donneth her jewelry;
Red fir and black fir sigh,
And I am lamenting the year gone by.

The bushes where I nested are all cut down,
They are felling the tall trees one by one,
And my mate is dead and gone,
In the winter she died and left me lone.

She lay in the thicket where I fear to go;
For when the March-winds after the snow
The leaves away did blow,
She was not there, and my heart is woe:

And sad is my song, when I begin to sing,
As I sit in the sunshine this merry spring:
Like a withered leaf I cling
To the white oak-bough, while the wood doth ring.

Spring is coming now, the sun again is gay;
Each day like a last spring's happy day.'—
Thus sang he; then from his spray
He saw me listening and flew away.

II

I NEVER shall love the snow again
Since Maurice died:
With corniced drift it blocked the lane,
And sheeted in a desolate plain
The country side.

The trees with silvery rime bedight
Their branches bare.
By day no sun appeared; by night
The hidden moon shed thievish light
In the misty air.

We fed the birds that flew around
In flocks to be fed:
No shelter in holly or brake they found.
The speckled thrush on the frozen ground
Lay frozen and dead.

We skated on stream and pond; we cut
The crinching snow
To Doric temple or Arctic hut;
We laughed and sang at nightfall, shut
By the fireside glow.

Yet grudged we our keen delights before
Maurice should come.
We said, In-door or out-of-door
We shall love life for a month or more,
When he is home.

They brought him home; 'twas two days late
For Christmas day:
Wrapped in white, in solemn state,
A flower in his hand, all still and straight
Our Maurice lay.

And two days ere the year outgave
We laid him low.
The best of us truly were not brave,
When we laid Maurice down in his grave
Under the snow.

12

NIGHTINGALES

BEAUTIFUL must be the mountains whence ye come,
And bright in the fruitful valleys the streams, where-
Ye learn your song: [from
Where are those starry woods? O might I wander
there,
Among the flowers, which in that heavenly air
Bloom the year long!

Nay, barren are those mountains and spent the
streams:
Our song is the voice of desire, that haunts our
dreams,
A throe of the heart,
Whose pining visions dim, forbidden hopes profound,
No dying cadence nor long sigh can sound,
For all our art.

Alone, aloud in the raptured ear of men
We pour our dark nocturnal secret; and then,
As night is withdrawn
From these sweet-springing meads and bursting boughs
of May,
Dream, while the innumerable choir of day
Welcome the dawn.

13

A song of my heart, as the sun peered o'er the sea,
Was born at morning to me:
And out of my treasure-house it chose
A melody, that arose

Of all fair sounds that I love, remembered together
In one; and I knew not whether
From waves of rustling wheat it was,
Recoveringly that pass:

Or a hum of bees in the queenly robes of the lime:
Or a descant in pairing time
Of warbling birds: or watery bells
Of rivulets in the hills:

Or whether on blazing downs a high lark's hymn
Alone in the azure dim:
Or a sough of pines, when the midnight wold
Is solitary and cold:

Or a lapping river-ripple all day chiding
The bow of my wherry gliding
Down Thames, between his flowery shores
Re-echoing to the oars:

Or anthem notes, wherever in archèd quires
The unheeded music twires,
And, centuries by, to the stony shade
Flies following and to fade:

Or a homely prattle of children's voices gay
'Mong garden joys at play:
Or a sundown chaunting of solemn rooks:
Or memory of my books,

Which hold the words that poets in many a tongue
To the irksome world have sung:
Or the voice, my happy lover, of thee
Now separated from me.

A ruby of fire in the burning sleep of my brain
Long hid my thought had lain,
Forgotten dreams of a thousand days
Ingathering to its rays,

The light of life in darkness tempering long;
Till now a perfect song,
A jewel of jewels it leapt above
To the coronal of my love.

14

FOUNDER'S DAY. A SECULAR ODE ON THE NINTH JUBILEE OF ETON COLLEGE

CHRIST and his Mother, heavenly maid,
Mary, in whose fair name was laid
Eton's corner, bless our youth
With truth, and purity, mother of truth!

O ye, 'neath breezy skies of June,
By silver Thames's lulling tune,
In shade of willow or oak, who try
The golden gates of poesy;

Or on the tabled sward all day
Match your strength in England's play,
Scholars of Henry, giving grace
To toil and force in game or race;

Exceed the prayer and keep the fame
Of him, the sorrowful king, who came
Here in his realm a realm to found,
Where he might stand for ever crowned.

Or whether with naked bodies flashing
Ye plunge in the lashing weir; or dashing
The oars of cedar skiffs, ye strain
Round the rushes and home again;—

Or what pursuit soe'er it be
That makes your mingled presence free,
When by the schoolgate 'neath the limes
Ye muster waiting the lazy chimes;

May Peace, that conquereth sin and death,
Temper for you her sword of faith;
Crown with honour the loving eyes,
And touch with mirth the mouth of the wise.

Here is eternal spring: for you
The very stars of heaven are new;
And aged Fame again is born,
Fresh as a peeping flower of morn.

For you shall Shakespeare's scene unroll,
Mozart shall steal your ravished soul,
Homer his bardic hymn rehearse,
Virgil recite his maiden verse.

Now learn, love, have, do, be the best;
Each in one thing excel the rest:
Strive; and hold fast this truth of heaven—
To him that hath shall more be given.

Slow on your dial the shadows creep,
So many hours for food and sleep,
So many hours till study tire,
So many hours for heart's desire.

These suns and moons shall memory save,
Mirrors bright for her magic cave;
Wherein may steadfast eyes behold
A self that groweth never old.

O in such prime enjoy your lot,
And when ye leave regret it not;
With wishing gifts in festal state
Pass ye the angel-sworded gate.

Then to the world let shine your light,
Children in play be lions in fight,
And match with red immortal deeds
The victory that made ring the meads:

Or by firm wisdom save your land
From giddy head and grasping hand:
IMPROVE THE BEST; so shall your sons
Better what ye have bettered once.

Send them here to the court of grace
Bearing your name to fill your place:
Ye in their time shall live again
The happy dream of Henry's reign:

And on his day your steps be bent
Where, saint and king, crowned with content,
He biddeth a prayer to bless his youth
With truth, and purity, mother of truth.

15

THE north wind came up yesternight
With the new year's full moon,
And rising as she gained her height,
Grew to a tempest soon.
Yet found he not on heaven's face
A task of cloud to clear;
There was no speck that he might chase
Off the blue hemisphere,
Nor vapour from the land to drive:
The frost-bound country held
Nought motionable or alive,
That 'gainst his wrath rebelled.
There scarce was hanging in the wood
A shrivelled leaf to reave;
No bud had burst its swathing hood
That he could rend or grieve:

Only the tall tree-skeletons,
Where they were shadowed all,
Wavered a little on the stones,
And on the white church-wall.

—Like as an artist in his mood,
Who reckons all as nought,
So he may quickly paint his nude,
Unutterable thought:
So Nature in a frenzied hour
By day or night will show
Dim indications of the power,
That doometh man to woe.
Ah, many have my visions been,
And some I know full well:
I would that all that I have seen
Were fit for speech to tell.—

And by the churchyard as I came,
It seemed my spirit passed
Into a land that hath no name,
Grey, melancholy and vast;
Where nothing comes: but Memory,
The widowed queen of Death,
Reigns, and with fixed, sepulchral eye
All slumber banisheth.

Each grain of writhen dust, that drapes
  That sickly, staring shore,
Its old chaotic change of shapes
  Remembers evermore.
And ghosts of cities long decayed,
  And ruined shrines of Fate
Gather the paths, that Time hath made
  Foolish and desolate.
Nor winter there hath hope of spring,
  Nor the pale night of day,
Since the old king with scorpion sting
  Hath done himself away.

* *

The morn was calm; the wind's last breath
  Had fal'n: in solemn hush
The golden moon went down beneath
  The dawning's crimson flush.

16

NORTH WIND IN OCTOBER

In the golden glade the chestnuts are fallen all;
From the sered boughs of the oak the acorns fall:
The beech scatters her ruddy fire;
The lime hath stripped to the cold,
And standeth naked above her yellow attire:
The larch thinneth her spire
To lay the ways of the wood with cloth of gold.

Out of the golden-green and white
Of the brake the fir-trees stand upright
In the forest of flame, and wave aloft
To the blue of heaven their blue-green tuftings soft.

But swiftly in shuddering gloom the splendours fail,
As the harrying North-wind beareth

A cloud of skirmishing hail
The grievèd woodland to smite:
In a hurricane through the trees he teareth,
Raking the boughs and the leaves rending,
And whistleth to the descending
Blows of his icy flail.
Gold and snow he mixeth in spite,
And whirleth afar; as away on his winnowing
flight
He passeth, and all again for awhile is bright.

17

FIRST SPRING MORNING

A CHILD'S POEM

Look! Look! the spring is come:
O feel the gentle air,
That wanders thro' the boughs to burst
The thick buds everywhere!
The birds are glad to see
The high unclouded sun:
Winter is fled away, they sing,
The gay time is begun.

Adown the meadows green
Let us go dance and play,
And look for violets in the lane,
And ramble far away
To gather primroses,
That in the woodland grow,
And hunt for oxlips, or if yet
The blades of bluebells show:

There the old woodman gruff
Hath half the coppice cut,
And weaves the hurdles all day long
Beside his willow hut.
We'll steal on him, and then
Startle him, all with glee
Singing our song of winter fled
And summer soon to be.

18

A VILLAGER

THERE was no lad handsomer than Willie was
The day that he came to father's house:
There was none had an eye as soft an' blue
As Willie's was, when he came to woo.

To a labouring life though bound thee be,
An' I on my father's ground live free,
I'll take thee, I said, for thy manly grace,
Thy gentle voice an' thy loving face.

'Tis forty years now since we were wed:
We are ailing an' grey needs not to be said:
But Willie's eye is as blue an' soft
As the day when he wooed me in father's croft.

Yet changed am I in body an' mind,
For Willie to me has ne'er been kind:
Merrily drinking an' singing with the men
He 'ud come home late six nights o' the se'n.

An' since the children be grown an' gone
He 'as shunned the house an' left me lone:
An' less an' less he brings me in
Of the little he now has strength to win.

The roof lets through the wind an' the wet,
An' master won't mend it with us in's debt:
An' all looks every day more worn,
An' the best of my gowns be shabby an' torn.

No wonder if words hav' a-grown to blows;
That matters not while nobody knows:
For love him I shall to the end of life,
An' be, as I swore, his own true wife.

An' when I am gone, he'll turn, an' see
His folly an' wrong, an' be sorry for me:
An' come to me there in the land o' bliss
To give me the love I looked for in this.

19

Weep not to-day: why should this sadness be?
Learn in present fears
To o'ermaster those tears
That unhindered conquer thee.

Think on thy past valour, thy future praise:
Up, sad heart, nor faint
In ungracious complaint,
Or a prayer for better days.

Daily thy life shortens, the grave's dark peace
Draweth surely nigh,
When good-night is good-bye;
For the sleeping shall not cease.

Fight, to be found fighting: nor far away
Deem, nor strange thy doom.
Like this sorrow 'twill come,
And the day will be to-day.

NEW
POEMS

NEW POEMS

ECLOGUE I

THE MONTHS

BASIL AND EDWARD

MAN hath with man on earth no holier bond
Than that the Muse weaves with her dreamy thread:
Nor e'er was such transcendent love more fond
Than that which Edward unto Basil led,
Wandering alone across the woody shires
To hear the living voice of that wide heart,
To see the eyes that read the world's desires,
And touch the hand that wrote the roving rhyme.
Diverse their lots as distant were their homes,
And since that early meeting, jealous Time
Knitting their loves had held their lives apart.

But now again were these fine lovers met
And sat together on a rocky hill
Looking upon the vales of Somerset,
Where the far sea gleam'd o'er the bosky combes,
Satisfying their spirits the livelong day
With various mirth and revelation due
And delicate intimacy of delight,
As there in happy indolence they lay
And drank the sun, while round the breezy height
Beneath their feet rabbit and listless ewe
Nibbled the scented herb and grass at will.

Much talked they at their ease; and at the last
Spoke Edward thus, 'Twas on this very hill
This time of the year,—but now twelve years are past,—
That you provoked in verse my younger skill
To praise the months against your rival song;
And ere the sun had westered ten degrees
Our rhyme had brought him thro' the Zodiac.
Have you remembered?'—Basil answer'd back,
'Guest of my solace, how could I forget?
Years fly as months that seem'd in youth so long.
The precious life that, like indifferent gold
Is disregarded in its worth to hold
Some jewel of love that God therein would set,

It passeth and is gone.'—'And yet not all'
Edward replied: 'The passion as I please
Of that past day I can to-day recall;
And if but you, as I, remember yet
Your part thereof, and will again rehearse,
For half an hour we may old Time outwit.'
And Basil said, 'Alas for my poor verse!
What happy memory of it still endures
Will thank your love: I have forgotten it.
Speak you my stanzas, I will ransom yours.
Begin you then as I that day began,
And I will follow as your answers ran.'

JANUARY

ED. The moon that mounts the sun's deserted way,
Turns the long winter night to a silver day;
But setteth golden in face of the solemn sight
Of her lord arising upon a world of white.

FEBRUARY

BA. I have in my heart a vision of spring begun
In a sheltering wood, that feels the kiss of the sun:
And a thrush adoreth the melting day that dies
In clouds of purple afloat upon saffron skies.

MARCH

ED. Now carol the birds at dawn, and some new lay
Announceth a homecome voyager every-day.
Beneath the tufted sallows the streamlet thrills
With the leaping trout and the gleam of the daffodils.

APRIL

BA. Then laugheth the year; with flowers the meads are bright;
The bursting branches are tipped with flames of light:
The landscape is light; the dark clouds flee above,
And the shades of the land are a blue that is deep as love.

MAY

ED. But if you have seen a village all red and old
In cherry-orchards a-sprinkle with white and gold,
By a hawthorn seated, or a witchelm flowering high,
A gay breeze making riot in the waving rye!

JUNE

BA. Then night retires from heaven; the high winds go
A-sailing in cloud-pavilions of cavern'd snow.
O June, sweet Philomel sang thy cradle-lay;
In rosy revel thy spirit shall pass away.

JULY

ED. Heavy is the green of the fields, heavy the trees
With foliage hang, drowsy the hum of bees
In the thundrous air : the crowded scents lie low :
Thro' tangle of weeds the river runneth slow.

AUGUST

BA. A reaper with dusty shoon and hat of straw
On the yellow field, his scythe in his armës braw :
Beneath the tall grey trees resting at noon
From sweat and swink with scythe and dusty shoon.

SEPTEMBER

ED. Earth's flaunting flower of passion fadeth fair
To ripening fruit in sunlit veils of the air,
As the art of man makes wisdom to glorify
The beauty and love of life born else to die.

OCTOBER

BA. On frosty morns with the woods aflame, down, down
The golden spoils fall thick from the chestnut crown.
May Autumn in tranquil glory her riches spend,
With mellow apples her orchard-branches bend.

NOVEMBER

ED. Sad mists have hid the sun, the land is forlorn:
The plough is afield, the hunter windeth his horn.
Dame Prudence looketh well to her winter stores,
And many a wise man finds his pleasure indoors.

DECEMBER

BA. I pray thee don thy jerkin of olden time,
Bring us good ice, and silver the trees with rime;
And I will good cheer, good music and wine bestow,
When the Christmas guest comes galoping over the snow.

Thus they in verse alternate sang the year
For rabbit shy and listless ewe to hear,
Among the grey rocks on the mountain green
Beneath the sky in fair and pastoral scene,
Like those Sicilian swains, whose doric tongue
After two thousand years is ever young,—
Sweet the pine's murmur, and, shepherd, sweet thy pipe,—
Or that which gentle Virgil, yet unripe,
Of Tityrus sang under the spreading beech
And gave to rustic clowns immortal speech,
By rocky fountain or on flowery mead

Bidding their idle flocks at will to feed,
While they, retreated to some bosky glade,
Together told their loves, and as they played
Sang what sweet thing soe'er the poet feigned:
  But these were men when good Victoria reigned,
Poets themselves, who without shepherd gear
Each of his native fancy sang the year.

ECLOGUE II

GIOVANNI DUPRÈ

LAWRENCE AND RICHARD

LAWRENCE

LOOK down the river—against the western sky—
The Ponte Santa Trinità—what throng
Slowly trails o'er with waving banners high,
With foot and horse! Surely they bear along
The spoil of one whom Florence honoureth:
And hark! the drum, the trumpeting dismay,
The wail of the triumphal march of death.

RICHARD

'Twill be the funeral of Giovánn Duprè

Wending to Santa Croce. Let us go
And see what relic of old splendour cheers
The dying ritual.

LAWRENCE

They esteem him well
To lay his bones with Michael Angelo.
Who might he be?

RICHARD

He too a sculptor, one
Who left a work long to resist the years.

LAWRENCE

You make me question further.

RICHARD

I can tell
All as we walk. A poor woodcarver's son,
Prenticed to cut his father's rude designs
(We have it from himself), maker of shrines,
In his mean workshop in Siena dreamed;
And saw as gods the artists of the earth,
And long'd to stand on their immortal shore,
And be as they, who in his vision gleam'd,
Dowering the world with grace for evermore.

So, taxing rest and leisure to one aim,
The boy of single will and inbred skill
Rose step by step to academic fame.

LAWRENCE

Do I not know him then? His figures fill
The tympana o'er Santa Croce's gate;
In the museum too, his Cain, that stands
A left-handed discobolos . . . . .

RICHARD

So great
His vogue, that elder art of classic worth
Went to the wall to give his statues room;
And last—his country's praise could do no more—
He cut the stone that honoured good Cavour.

LAWRENCE

I have seen the things.

RICHARD

He, finding in his hands
His life-desire possest, fell not in gloom,
Nor froth'd in vanity: his Sabbath earn'd
He look'd to spend in meditative rest:
So laying chisel by, he took a pen

To tell his story to his countrymen,
And prove (he did it) that the flower of all,
Rarest to attain, is in the power of all.

LAWRENCE

Yet nought he ever made, that I have learn'd,
In wood or stone deserved, nay not his best,
The Greek or Tuscan name for beautiful.
'Twas level with its praise, had force to pull
Favour from fashion.

RICHARD

Yet he made one thing
Worthy of the lily city in her spring;
For while in vain the forms of beauty he aped,
A perfect spirit in himself he shaped;
And all his lifetime doing less than well
Where he profess'd nor doubted to excel,
Now, where he had no scholarship, but drew
His art from love, 'twas better than he knew:
And when he sat to write, lo! by him stood
The heavenly Muse, who smiles on all things good;
And for his truth's sake, for his stainless mind,
His homely love and faith, she now grew kind,
And changed the crown, that from the folk he got,
For her green laurel, and he knew it not.

LAWRENCE

Ah! Love of Beauty! This man then mistook
Ambition for her?

RICHARD

In simplicity
Erring he kept his truth; and in his book
The statue of his grace is fair to see.

LAWRENCE

Then buried with their great he well may be.

RICHARD

And number'd with the saints, not among them
Who painted saints. Join we his requiem.

ECLOGUE III

FOURTH OF JUNE AT ETON

RICHARD AND GODFRET

RICHARD

BENEATH the wattled bank the eddies swarm
In wandering dimples o'er the shady pool:
The same their chase as when I was at school;
The same the music, where in shallows warm
The current, sunder'd by the bushy isles,
Returns to join the main, and struggles free
Above the willows, gurgling thro' the piles:
Nothing is changed, and yet how changed are we!
—What can bring Godfrey to the Muses' bower?

GODFRET

What but brings you? The festal day of the year;

To live in boyish memories for an hour;
See and be seen : tho' you come seldom here.

RICHARD

Dread of the pang it was, fear to behold
What once was all myself, that kept me away.

GODFREY

You miss new pleasures coveting the old.

RICHARD

They need have prudence, who in courage lack;
'Twas that I might go on I looked not back.

GODFREY

Of all our company he, who, we say,
Fruited the laughing flower of liberty!

RICHARD

Ah! had I my desire, so should it be.

GODFREY

Nay, but I know this melancholy mood :
'Twas your poetic fancy when a boy.

RICHARD

For Fancy cannot live on real food :

In youth she will despise familiar joy
To dwell in mournful shades; as they grow real,
Then buildeth she of joy her far ideal.

GODFREY

And so perverteth all. This stream to me
Sings, and in sunny ripples lingeringly
The water saith 'Ah me! where have I lept?
Into what garden of life? what banks are these,
What secret lawns, what ancient towers and trees?
Where the young sons of heav'n, with shouts of play
Or low delighted speech, welcome the day,
As if the poetry of the earth had slept
To wake in ecstasy. O stay me! alas!
Stay me, ye happy isles, ere that I pass
Without a memory on my sullen course
By the black city to the tossing seas!'

RICHARD

So might this old oak say 'My heart is sere;
With greater effort every year I force
My stubborn leafage: soon my branch will crack,
And I shall fall or perish in the wrack:
And here another tree its crown will rear,
And see for centuries the boys at play:

And 'neath its boughs, on some fine holiday,
Old men shall prate as these.' Come see the game.

GODFREY

Yes, if you will. 'Tis all one picture fair.

RICHARD

Made in a mirror, and who looketh there
Must see himself. Is not a dream the same?

GODFREY

Life is a dream.

RICHARD

And you, who say it, seem
Dreaming to speak to a phantom in a dream.

4

ELEGY

THE SUMMER-HOUSE ON THE MOUND

HOW well my eyes remember the dim path!
My homeing heart no happier playground hath.
I need not close my lids but it appears
Through the bewilderment of forty years
To tempt my feet, my childish feet, between
Its leafy walls, beneath its arching green;
Fairer than dream of sleep, than Hope more fair
Leading to dreamless sleep her sister Care.

There grew two fellow limes, two rising trees,
Shadowing the lawn, the summer haunt of bees,
Whose stems, engraved with many a russet scar
From the spear-hurlings of our mimic war,
Pillar'd the portico to that wide walk,

A mossy terrace of the native chalk
Fashion'd, that led thro' the dark shades around
Straight to the wooden temple on the mound.
There live the memories of my early days,
There still with childish heart my spirit plays;
Yea, terror-stricken by the fiend despair
When she hath fled me, I have found her there;
And there 'tis ever noon, and glad suns bring
Alternate days of summer and of spring,
With childish thought, and childish faces bright,
And all unknown save but the hour's delight.

High on the mound the ivied arbour stood,
A dome of straw upheld on rustic wood:
Hidden in fern the steps of the ascent,
Whereby unto the southern front we went,
And from the dark plantation climbing free,
Over a valley look'd out on the sea.
That sea is ever bright and blue, the sky
Serene and blue, and ever white ships lie
High on the horizon steadfast in full sail,
Or nearer in the roads pass within hail
Of naked brigs and barques that windbound ride
At their taut cables heading to the tide.

There many an hour I have sat to watch; nay, now

The brazen disk is cold against my brow,
And in my sight a circle of the sea
Enlarged to swiftness, where the salt waves flee,
And ships in stately motion pass so near
That what I see is speaking to my ear:
I hear the waves dash and the tackle strain,
The canvas flap, the rattle of the chain
That runs out thro' the hawse, the clank of the winch
Winding the rusty cable inch by inch,
Till half I wonder if they have no care,
Those sailors, that my glass is brought to bear
On all their doings, if I vex them not
On every petty task of their rough lot
Prying and spying, searching every craft
From painted truck to gunnel, fore and aft,—
Thro' idle Sundays as I have watch'd them lean
Long hours upon the rail, or neath its screen
Prone on the deck to lie outstretch'd at length,
Sunk in renewal of their wearied strength.

But what a feast of joy to me, if some
Fast-sailing frigate to the Channel come
Back'd here her topsail, or brought gently up
Let from her bow the splashing anchor drop,
By faint contrary wind stay'd in her cruise,
The *Phaethon* or dancing *Arethuse*,

Or some immense three-decker of the line,
Romantic as the tale of Troy divine;
Ere yet our iron age had doom'd to fall
The towering freeboard of the wooden wall,
And for the engines of a mightier Mars
Clipp'd their wide wings, and dock'd their soaring spars.
The gale that in their tackle sang, the wave
That neath their gilded galleries dasht so brave
Lost then their merriment, nor look to play
With the heavy-hearted monsters of to-day.

One noon in March upon that anchoring ground
Came Napier's fleet unto the Baltic bound:
Cloudless the sky and calm and blue the sea,
As round Saint Margaret's cliff mysteriously,
Those murderous queens walking in Sabbath sleep
Glided in line upon the windless deep:
For in those days was first seen low and black
Beside the full-rigg'd mast the strange smoke-stack,
And neath their stern revolv'd the twisted fan.
Many I knew as soon as I might scan,
The heavy *Royal George*, the *Acre* bright,
The *Hogue* and *Ajax*, and could name aright
Others that I remember now no more;
But chief, her blue flag flying at the fore,

With fighting guns a hundred thirty and one,
The Admiral ship *The Duke of Wellington*,
Whereon sail'd George, who in her gig had flown
The silken ensign by our sisters sewn.
The iron Duke himself,—whose soldier fame
To England's proudest ship had given her name,
And whose white hairs in this my earliest scene
Had scarce more honour'd than accustom'd been,—
Was two years since to his last haven past:
I had seen his castle-flag to fall half-mast
One morn as I sat looking on the sea,
When thus all England's grief came first to me,
Who hold my childhood favour'd that I knew
So well the face that won at Waterloo.

But now 'tis other wars, and other men;—
The year that Napier sail'd, my years were ten—
Yea, and new homes and loves my heart hath found:
A priest has there usurped the ivied mound,
The bell that call'd to horse calls now to prayers,
And silent nuns tread the familiar stairs.
Within the peach-clad walls that old outlaw,
The Roman wolf, scratches with privy paw.

5

O Love, I complain,
Complain of thee often,
Because thou dost soften
My being to pain:

Thou makest me fear
The mind that createth,
That loves not nor hateth
In justice austere;

Who, ere he make one,
With millions toyeth,
And lightly destroyeth
Whate'er is begun.

An' wer't not for thee,
My glorious passion,
My heart I could fashion
To sternness, as he.

But thee, Love, he made
Lest man should defy him,
Connive and outvie him,
And not be afraid :

Nay, thee, Love, he gave
His terrors to cover,
And turn to a lover
His insolent slave.

6

THE SOUTH WIND

THE south wind rose at dusk of the winter day,
The warm breath of the western sea
Circling wrapp'd the isle with his cloke of cloud,
And it now reach'd even to me, at dusk of the day,
And moan'd in the branches aloud:
While here and there, in patches of dark space,
A star shone forth from its heavenly place,
As a spark that is borne in the smoky chase;
And, looking up, there fell on my face—
Could it be drops of rain
Soft as the wind, that fell on my face?
Gossamers light as threads of the summer dawn,
Suck'd by the sun from midmost calms of the main,
From groves of coral islands secretly drawn,
O'er half the round of earth to be driven,
Now to fall on my face
In silky skeins spun from the mists of heaven.

Who art thou, in wind and darkness and soft rain
Thyself that robest, that bendest in sighing pines
To whisper thy truth? that usest for signs
A hurried glimpse of the moon, the glance of a star
In the rifted sky?
Who art thou, that with thee I
Woo and am wooed?
That robing thyself in darkness and soft rain
Choosest my chosen solitude,
Coming so far
To tell thy secret again,
As a mother her child, in her folding arm
Of a winter night by a flickering fire,
Telleth the same tale o'er and o'er
With gentle voice, and I never tire,
So imperceptibly changeth the charm,
As Love on buried ecstasy buildeth his tower,
—Like as the stem that beareth the flower
By trembling is knit to power;—
Ah! long ago
In thy first rapture I renounced my lot,
The vanity, the despondency and the woe,
And seeking thee to know
Well was't for me, and evermore
I am thine, I know not what.

For me thou seekest ever, me wondering a day
In the eternal alternations, me
Free for a stolen moment of chance
To dream a beautiful dream
In the everlasting dance
Of speechless worlds, the unsearchable scheme,
To me thou findest the way,
Me and whomsoe'er
I have found my dream to share
Still with thy charm encircling; even to-night
To me and my love in darkness and soft rain
Under the sighing pines thou comest again,
And staying our speech with mystery of delight,
Of the kiss that I give a wonder thou makest,
And the kiss that I take thou takest.

7

I CLIMB the mossy bank of the glade:
My love awaiteth me in the shade.

She holdeth a book that she never heedeth:
In Goddës work her spirit readeth.

She is all to me, and I to her:
When we embrace, the stars confer.

O my love, from beyond the sky
I am calling thy heart, and who but I?

Fresh as love is the breeze of June,
In the dappled shade of the summer noon.

Catullus, throwing his heart away,
Gave fewer kisses every day.

Heracleitus, spending his youth
In search of wisdom, had less of truth.

Flame of fire was the poet's desire:
The thinker found that life was fire.

O my love! my song is done:
My kiss hath both their fires in one.

8

To my love I whisper, and say
Knowest thou why I love thee?—Nay:
Nay, she saith; O tell me again.—

When in her ear the secret I tell,
She smileth with joy incredible—

Ha! she is vain—O Nay—
Then tell us!—Nay, O nay.

But this is in my heart,
That Love is Nature's perfect art,
And man hath got his fancy hence,
To clothe his thought in forms of sense.

Fair are thy works, O man, and fair

Thy dreams of soul in garments rare,
  Beautiful past compare,
Yea, godlike when thou hast the skill
To steal a stir of the heavenly thrill:

  But O, have care, have care!
'Tis envious even to dare:
And many a fiend is watching well
To flush thy reed with the fire of hell.

9

My delight and thy delight
Walking, like two angels white,
In the gardens of the night:

My desire and thy desire
Twining to a tongue of fire,
Leaping live, and laughing higher;

Thro' the everlasting strife
In the mystery of life.

Love, from whom the world begun
Hath the secret of the sun.

Love can tell, and love alone,
Whence the million stars were strewn,
Why each atom knows its own,
How, in spite of woe and death,
Gay is life, and sweet is breath:

This he taught us, this we knew,
Happy in his science true,
Hand in hand as we stood
Neath the shadows of the wood,
Heart to heart as we lay
In the dawning of the day.

10

SEPTUAGESIMA

Now all the windows with frost are blinded,
  As punctual day with greedy smile
Lifts like a Cyclops evil-minded
  His ruddy eyeball over the isle.

In an hour 'tis paled, in an hour ascended
  A dazzling light in the cloudless grey.
Steel is the ice; the snow unblended
  Is trod to dust on the white highway.

The lambkins frisk; the shepherd is melting
  Drink for the ewes with a fire of straw:
The red flames leap at the wild air pelting
  Bitterly thro' the leafless shaw.

Around, from many a village steeple
The sabbath-bells hum over the snow :
I give a blessing to parson and people
Across the fields as away I go.

Over the hills and over the meadows
Gay is my way till day be done :
Blue as the heaven are all the shadows,
And every light is gold in the sun.

II

THE sea keeps not the Sabbath day,
His waves come rolling evermore;
His noisy toil grindeth the shore,
And all the cliff is drencht with spray.

Here as we sit, my love and I,
Under the pine upon the hill,
The sadness of the clouded sky,
The bitter wind, the gloomy roar,
The seamew's melancholy cry
With loving fancy suit but ill.

We talk of moons and cooling suns,
Of geologic time and tide,
The eternal sluggards that abide
While our fair love so swiftly runs,

Of nature that doth half consent
That man should guess her dreary scheme

Lest he should live too well content
In his fair house of mirth and dream :

Whose labour irks his ageing heart,
His heart that wearies of desire,
Being so fugitive a part
Of what so slowly must expire.

She in her agelong toil and care
Persistent, wearies not nor stays,
Mocking alike hope and despair.

—Ah, but she too can mock our praise,
Enchanted on her brighter days,

Days, that the thought of grief refuse,
Days that are one with human art,
Worthy of the Virgilian muse,
Fit for the gaiety of Mozart.

12

Riding adown the country lanes
One day in spring,
Heavy at heart with all the pains
Of man's imagining:—

The mist was not yet melted quite
Into the sky:
The small round sun was dazzling white,
The merry larks sang high:

The grassy northern slopes were laid
In sparkling dew,
Out of the slow-retreating shade
Turning from sleep anew:

Deep in the sunny vale a burn
Ran with the lane,
O'erhung with ivy, moss and fern
It laughed in joyful strain:

And primroses shot long and lush
Their cluster'd cream:
Robin and wren and amorous thrush
Carol'd above the stream:

The stillness of the lenten air
Call'd into sound
The motions of all life that were
In field and farm around:

So fair it was, so sweet and bright,
The jocund Spring
Awoke in me the old delight
Of man's imagining,

Riding adown the country lanes:
The larks sang high.—
O heart! for all thy griefs and pains
Thou shalt be loth to die.

13

PATER FILIO

Sense with keenest edge unusèd,
  Yet unsteel'd by scathing fire;
Lovely feet as yet unbruisèd
  On the ways of dark desire;
Sweetest hope that lookest smiling
O'er the wilderness defiling!

Why such beauty, to be blighted
  By the swarm of foul destruction?
Why such innocence delighted,
  When sin stalks to thy seduction?
All the litanies e'er chaunted
Shall not keep thy faith undaunted.

I have pray'd the sainted Morning
  To unclasp her hands to hold thee;

From resignful Eve's adorning
  Stol'n a robe of peace to enfold thee;
With all charms of man's contriving
Arm'd thee for thy lonely striving.

Me too once unthinking Nature,
  —Whence Love's timeless mockery took
    me,—
Fashion'd so divine a creature,
  Yea, and like a beast forsook me.
I forgave, but tell the measure
Of her crime in thee, my treasure.

14

NOVEMBER

THE lonely season in lonely lands, when fled
Are half the birds, and mists lie low, and the sun
Is rarely seen, nor strayeth far from his bed;
The short days pass unwelcomed one by one.

Out by the ricks the mantled engine stands
Crestfallen, deserted,—for now all hands
Are told to the plough,—and ere it is dawn appear
The teams following and crossing far and near,
As hour by hour they broaden the brown bands
Of the striped fields; and behind them firk and prance
The heavy rooks, and daws grey-pated dance:
As awhile, surmounting a crest, in sharp outline
(A miniature of toil, a gem's design,)
They are pictured, horses and men, or now near by
Above the lane they shout lifting the share,

By the trim hedgerow bloom'd with purple air;
Where, under the thorns, dead leaves in huddle lie
Packed by the gales of Autumn, and in and out
The small wrens glide
With a happy note of cheer,
And yellow amorets flutter above and about,
Gay, familiar in fear.

And now, if the night shall be cold, across the sky
Linnets and twites, in small flocks helter-skelter,
All the afternoon to the gardens fly,
From thistle-pastures hurrying to gain the shelter
Of American rhododendron or cherry-laurel:
And here and there, near chilly setting of sun,
In an isolated tree a congregation
Of starlings chatter and chide,
Thickset as summer leaves, in garrulous quarrel:
Suddenly they hush as one,—
The tree top springs,—
And off, with a whirr of wings,
They fly by the score
To the holly-thicket, and there with myriads more
Dispute for the roosts; and from the unseen nation
A babel of tongues, like running water unceasing,
Makes live the wood, the flocking cries increasing,

Wrangling discordantly, incessantly,
While falls the night on them self-occupied;
The long dark night, that lengthens slow,
Deepening with Winter to starve grass and tree,
And soon to bury in snow
The Earth, that, sleeping 'neath her frozen stole,
Shall dream a dream crept from the sunless pole
Of how her end shall be.

15

WINTER NIGHTFALL

THE day begins to droop,—
  Its course is done:
But nothing tells the place
  Of the setting sun.

The hazy darkness deepens,
  And up the lane
You may hear, but cannot see,
  The homing wain.

An engine pants and hums
  In the farm hard by:
Its lowering smoke is lost
  In the lowering sky.

The soaking branches drip,
And all night through
The dropping will not cease
In the avenue.

A tall man there in the house
Must keep his chair:
He knows he will never again
Breathe the spring air:

His heart is worn with work;
He is giddy and sick
If he rise to go as far
As the nearest rick:

He thinks of his morn of life,
His hale, strong years;
And braves as he may the night
Of darkness and tears.

16

SINCE we loved,—(the earth that shook
As we kissed, fresh beauty took)—
Love hath been as poets paint,
Life as heaven is to a saint;

All my joys my hope excel,
All my work hath prosper'd well,
All my songs have happy been,
O my love, my life, my queen.

17

When Death to either shall come,—
I pray it be first to me,—
Be happy as ever at home,
If so, as I wish, it be.

Possess thy heart, my own;
And sing to the child on thy knee,
Or read to thyself alone
The songs that I made for thee.

18

WISHES

I WISH'D to sing thy grace, but nought
Found upon earth that could compare:
Some day, maybe, in heaven, I thought,—
If I should win the welcome there,—

There might I make thee many a song:
But now it is enough to say
I ne'er have done our life the wrong
Of wishing for a happier day.

19

A LOVE LYRIC

Why art thou sad, my dearest?
What terror is it thou fearest,
Braver who art than I
  The fiend to defy?

Why art thou sad, my dearest?
And why in tears appearest,
Closer than I that wert
  At hiding thy hurt?

Why art thou sad, my dearest,
Since now my voice thou hearest?
Who with a kiss restore
  Thy valour of yore.

20

ΕΡΩΣ

Why hast thou nothing in thy face?
Thou idol of the human race,
Thou tyrant of the human heart,
The flower of lovely youth that art;
Yea, and that standest in thy youth
An image of eternal Truth,
With thy exuberant flesh so fair,
That only Pheidias might compare,
Ere from his chaste marmoreal form
Time had decayed the colours warm;
Like to his gods in thy proud dress
Thy starry sheen of nakedness.

Surely thy body is thy mind,
For in thy face is nought to find,
Only thy soft unchristen'd smile,

That shadows neither love nor guile,
But shameless will and power immense,
In secret sensuous innocence.

O king of joy, what is thy thought?
I dream thou knowest it is nought,
And wouldst in darkness come, but thou
Makest the light where'er thou go.
Ah yet no victim of thy grace,
None who e'er long'd for thy embrace,
Hath cared to look upon thy face.

21

THE FAIR BRASS

An effigy of brass
Trodden by careless feet
Of worshippers that pass,
Beautiful and complete,

Lieth in the sombre aisle
Of this old church unwreckt,
And still from modern style
Shielded by kind neglect.

It shows a warrior arm'd:
Across his iron breast
His hands by death are charmed
To leave his sword at rest,

Wherewith he led his men
O'ersea, and smote to hell
The astonisht Saracen,
Nor doubted he did well.

Would wé could teach our sons
His trust in face of doom,
Or give our bravest ones
A comparable tomb:

Such as to look on shrives
The heart of half its care;
So in each line survives
The spirit that made it fair;

So fair the characters,
With which the dusty scroll,
That tells his title, stirs
A requiem for his soul.

Yet dearer far to me,
And brave as he are they,
Who fight by land and sea
For England at this day;

Whose vile memorials,
In mournful marbles gilt,
Deface the beauteous walls
By growing glory built:

Heirs of our antique shrines,
Sires of our future fame,
Whose starry honour shines
In many a noble name

Across the deathful days,
Link'd in the brotherhood
That loves our country's praise,
And lives for heavenly good.

22

THE DUTEOUS HEART

SPIRIT of grace and beauty,
Whom men so much miscall;
Maidenly, modest duty,
I cry thee fair befal!

Pity for them that shun thee,
Sorrow for them that hate,
Glory, hath any won thee
To dwell in high estate!

But rather thou delightest
To walk in humble ways,
Keeping thy favour brightest
Uncrown'd by foolish praise;

In such retirement dwelling,
Where, hath the worldling been,
He straight returneth telling
Of sights that he hath seen,

Of simple men and truest
Faces of girl and boy;
The souls whom thou enduest
With gentle peace and joy.

Fair from my song befal thee,
Spirit of beauty and grace!
Men that so much miscall thee
Have never seen thy face.

23

THE IDLE FLOWERS

I HAVE sown upon the fields
Eyebright and Pimpernel,
And Pansy and Poppy-seed
Ripen'd and scatter'd well,

And silver Lady-smock
The meads with light to
Cowslip and Butter
Daisy and Daffoda;

King-cup and Fleur-de-lys
Upon the marsh to meet
With Comfrey, Watermint,
Loose-strife and Meadowsweet;

And all along the stream
My care hath not forgot
Crowfoot's white galaxy
And love's Forget-me-not :

And where high grasses wave
Shall great Moon-daisies blink,
With Rattle and Sorrel sharp
And Robin's ragged pink.

Thick on the woodland floor
Gay company shall be,
Primrose and Hyacinth
And frail Anemone,

Perennial Strawberry-bloom,
Woodsorrel's pencilled veil,
Dishevel'd Willow-weed
And Orchis purple and pale,

Bugle, that blushes blue,
And Woodruff's snowy gem,
Proud Foxglove's finger-bells
And Spurge with milky stem.

High on the downs so bare,
Where thou dost love to climb,
Pink Thrift and Milkwort are,
Lotus and scented Thyme;

And in the shady lanes
Bold Arum's hood of green,
Herb Robert, Violet,
Starwort and Celandine;

And by the dusty road
Bedstraw and Mullein tall,
With red Valerian
And Toadflax on the wall,

Yarrow and Chicory,
That hath for hue no like,
Silene and Mallow mild
And Agrimony's spike,

Blue-eyed Veronicas
And grey-faced Scabious
And downy Silverweed
And striped Convolvulus:

Harebell shall haunt the banks,
And thro' the hedgerow peer
Withwind and Snapdragon
And Nightshade's flower of fear.

And where men never sow,
Have I my Thistles set,
Ragwort and stiff Wormwood
And straggling Mignonette,

Bugloss and Burdock rank
And prickly Teasel high,
With Umbels yellow and white,
That come to kexes dry.

Pale Chlora shalt thou find,
Sun-loving Centaury,
Cranesbill and Sinjunwort,
Cinquefoil and Betony:

Shock-headed Dandelion,
That drank the fire of the sun
Hawkweed and Marigold,
Cornflower and Campion.

Let Oak and Ash grow strong,
Let Beech her branches spread;
Let Grass and Barley throng
And waving Wheat for bread;

Be share and sickle bright
To labour at all hours;
For thee and thy delight
I have made the idle flowers.

But now 'tis Winter, child,
And bitter northwinds blow,
The ways are wet and wild,
The land is laid in snow.

24

DUNSTONE HILL

A COTTAGE built of native stone
Stands on the mountain-moor alone,
High from man's dwelling on the wide
And solitary mountain-side,

The purple mountain-side, where all
The dewy night the meteors fall,
And the pale stars musically set
To the watery bells of the rivulet,

And all day long, purple and dun,
The vast moors stretch beneath the sun,
The wide wind passeth fresh and hale,
And whirring grouse and blackcock sail.

Ah, heavenly Peace, where dost thou dwell?
Surely 'twas here thou hadst a cell,
Till flaming Love, wandering astray
With fury and blood, drove thee away.—

Far down across the valley deep
The town is hid in smoky sleep,
At moonless nightfall wakening slow
Upon the dark with lurid glow:

Beyond, afar the widening view
Merges into the soften'd blue,
Cornfield and forest, hill and stream,
Fair England in her pastoral dream.

To one who looketh from this hill
Life seems asleep, all is so still:
Nought passeth save the travelling shade
Of clouds on high that float and fade:

Nor since this landscape saw the sun
Might other motion o'er it run,
Till to man's scheming heart it came
To make a steed of steel and flame.

Him may you mark in every vale
Moving beneath his fleecy trail,
And tell whene'er the motions die
Where every town and hamlet lie.

He gives the distance life to-day,
Rushing upon his level'd way
From man's abode to man's abode,
And mocks the Roman's vaunted road,

Which o'er the moor purple and dun
Still wanders white beneath the sun,
Deserted now of men and lone
Save for this cot of native stone.

There ever by the whiten'd wall
Standeth a maiden fair and tall,
And all day long in vacant dream
Watcheth afar the flying steam.

25

SCREAMING TARN

THE saddest place that e'er I saw
  Is the deep tarn above the inn
That crowns the mountain-road, whereby
  One southward bound his way must win.

Sunk on the table of the ridge
  From its deep shores is nought to see:
The unresting wind lashes and chills
  Its shivering ripples ceaselessly.

Three sides 'tis banked with stones aslant,
  And down the fourth the rushes grow,
And yellow sedge fringing the edge
  With lengthen'd image all arow.

'Tis square and black, and on its face
When noon is still, the mirror'd sky
Looks dark and further from the earth
Than when you gaze at it on high.

At mid of night, if one be there,
—So say the people of the hill—
A fearful shriek of death is heard,
One sudden scream both loud and shrill.

And some have seen on stilly nights,
And when the moon was clear and round,
Bubbles which to the surface swam
And burst as if they held the sound.—

'Twas in the days ere hapless Charles
Losing his crown had lost his head,
This tale is told of him who kept
The inn upon the watershed :

He was a lowbred ruin'd man
Whom lawless times set free from fear :
One evening to his house there rode
A young and gentle cavalier.

With curling hair and linen fair
And jewel-hilted sword he went;
The horse he rode he had ridden far,
And he was with his journey spent.

He asked a lodging for the night,
His valise from his steed unbound,
He let none bear it but himself
And set it by him on the ground.

'Here 's gold or jewels,' thought the host,
'That 's carrying south to find the king.'
He chattered many a loyal word,
And scraps of royal airs gan sing.

His guest thereat grew more at ease
And o'er his wine he gave a toast,
But little ate, and to his room
Carried his sack behind the host.

'Now rest you well,' the host he said,
But of his wish the word fell wide;
Nor did he now forget his son
Who fell in fight by Cromwell's side.

Revenge and poverty have brought
  Full gentler heart than his to crime;
And he was one by nature rude,
  B rn to foul deeds at any time.

With unshod feet at dead of night
  In stealth he to the guest-room crept,
Lantern and dagger in his hand,
  And stabbed his victim while he slept.

But as he struck a scream there came,
  A fearful scream so loud and shrill:
He whelm'd the face with pillows o'er,
  And lean'd till all had long been still.

Then to the face the flame he held
  To see there should no life remain:—
When lo! his brutal heart was quell'd:
  'Twas a fair woman he had slain.

The tan upon her face was paint,
  The manly hair was torn away,
Soft was the breast that he had pierced;
  Beautiful in her death she lay.

His was no heart to faint at crime,
Tho' half he wished the deed undone.
He pulled the valise from the bed
To find what booty he had won.

He cut the straps, and pushed within
His murderous fingers to their theft.
A deathly sweat came o'er his brow,
He had no sense nor meaning left.

He touched not gold, it was not cold,
It was not hard, it felt like flesh.
He drew out by the curling hair
A young man's head, and murder'd fresh;

A young man's head, cut by the neck.
But what was dreader still to see,
Her whom he had slain he saw again,
The twain were like as like can be.

Brother and sister if they were,
Both in one shroud they now were wound,—
Across his back and down the stair,
Out of the house without a sound.

He made his way unto the tarn,
The night was dark and still and dank;
The ripple chuckling neath the boat
Laughed as he drew it to the bank.

Upon the bottom of the boat
He laid his burden flat and low,
And on them laid the square sandstones
That round about the margin go.

Stone upon stone he weigh'd them down,
Until the boat would hold no more;
The freeboard now was scarce an inch:
He stripp'd his clothes and push'd from shore.

All naked to the middle pool
He swam behind in the dark night;
And there he let the water in
And sank his terror out of sight.

He swam ashore, and donn'd his dress,
And scraped his bloody fingers clean;
Ran home and on his victim's steed
Mounted, and never more was seen.

But to a comrade ere he died
He told his story guess'd of none:
So from his lips the crime returned
To haunt the spot where it was done.

26

THE ISLE OF ACHILLES

(FROM THE GREEK)

Τὸν φίλτατόν σοι παῖδ' ἐμοί τ', Ἀχιλλέα
ὄψει δόμους ναίοντα νησιωτικοὺς
Λευκὴν κατ' ἀκτὴν ἐντὸς Εὐξείνου πόρου.

Eur. And. 1250.

VOYAGING northwards by the western strand
Of the Euxine sea we came to where the land
Sinks low in salt morass and wooded plain:
Here mighty Ister pushes to the main,
Forking his turbid flood in channels three
To plough the sands with which he chokes the sea.

Against his middle arm, not many a mile
In the offing of black water is the isle
Named of Achilles, or as Leukê known,
Which tender Thetis, counselling alone
With her wise sire beneath the ocean-wave,

Unto her child's departed spirit gave,
Where he might still his love and fame enjoy,
Through the vain Danaan cause fordone at Troy.
Thither Achilles passed, and long fulfill'd
His earthly lot, as the high gods had will'd,
Far from the rivalries of men, from strife,
From arms, from woman's love and toil of life.
Now of his lone abode I will unfold
What there I saw, or was by others told.

There is in truth a temple on the isle;
Therein a wooden statue of rude style
And workmanship antique with helm of lead:
Else all is desert, uninhabited;
Only a few goats browse the wind-swept rocks,
And oft the stragglers of their starving flocks
Are caught and sacrificed by whomsoe'er,
Whoever of chance or purpose hither fare:
About the fence lie strewn their bleaching bones.

But in the temple jewels and precious stones,
Upheapt with golden rings and vials lie,
Thankofferings to Achilles, and thereby,
Written or scratch'd upon the walls in view,
Inscriptions, with the givers' names thereto,
Some in Romaic character, some Greek,

As each man in the tongue that he might speak
Wrote verse of praise, or prayer for good to come,
To Achilles most, but to Patroclus some ;
For those who strongly would Achilles move
Approach him by the pathway of his love.

Thousands of birds frequent the sheltering shrine,
The dippers and the swimmers of the brine,
Sea-mew and gull and diving cormorant,
Fishers that on the high cliff make their haunt
Sheer inaccessible, and sun themselves
Huddled arow upon the narrow shelves :—
And surely no like wonder ere hath been
As that such birds should keep the temple clean ;
But thus they do: at earliest dawn of day
They flock to sea and in the waters play,
And when they well have wet their plumage light,
Back to the sanctuary they take flight
Splashing the walls and columns with fresh brine,
Till all the stone doth fairly drip and shine,
When off again they skim asea for more
And soon returning sprinkle steps and floor,
And sweep all cleanly with their wide-spread wings.

From other men I have learnt further things.
If any of free purpose, thus they tell,

Sail'd hither to consult the oracle,—
For oracle there was,—they sacrificed
Such victims as they brought, if such sufficed,
And some they slew, some to the god set free:
But they who driven from their course at sea
Chanced on the isle, took of the goats thereon
And pray'd Achilles to accept his own.
Then made they a gift, and when they had offer'd once,
If to their question there was no response,
They added to the gift and asked again;
Yea twice and more, until the god should deign
Answer to give, their offering they renew'd;
Whereby great riches to the shrine ensued.
And when both sacrifice and gifts were made
They worship'd at the shrine, and as they pray'd
Sailors aver that often hath been seen
A man like to a god, of warrior mien,
A beauteous form of figure swift and strong;
Down on his shoulders his light hair hung long
And his full armour was enchast with gold:
While some, who with their eyes might nought behold,
Say that with music strange the air was stir'd;
And some there are, who have both seen and heard:
And if a man wish to be favour'd more,
He need but spend one night upon the shore;

To him in sleep Achilles will appear
And lead him to his tent, and with good cheer
Show him all friendliness that men desire;
Patroclus pours the wine, and he his lyre
Takes from the pole and plays the strains thereon
Which Cheiron taught him first on Pelion.

These things I tell as they were told to me,
Nor do I question but it well may be:
For sure I am that, if man ever was,
Achilles was a hero, both because
Of his high birth and beauty, his country's call,
His valour of soul, his early death withal,
For Homer's praise, the crown of human art;
And that above all praise he had at heart
A gentler passion in her sovran sway,
And when his love died threw his life away.

27

AN ANNIVERSARY

HE

BRIGHT, my belovèd, be thy day,
This eve of Summer's fall:
And Autumn mass his flowers gay
To crown thy festival!

SHE

I care not if the morn be bright,
Living in thy love-rays:
No flower I need for my delight,
Being crownèd with thy praise.

HE

O many years and joyfully
This sun to thee return;
Ever all men speak well of thee,
Nor any angel mourn!

SHE

For length of life I would not pray,
If thy life were to seek;
Nor ask what men and angels say
But when of thee they speak.

HE

Arise! The sky hath heard my song,
The flowers o'erhear thy praise;
And little loves are waking long
To wish thee happy days.

28

REGINA CARA

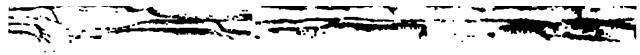
JUBILEE-SONG, FOR MUSIC, 1897

HARK! The world is full of thy praise,
England's Queen of many days;
Who, knowing how to rule the free,
Hast given a crown to monarchy.

Honour, Truth and growing Peace
Follow Britannia's wide increase,
And Nature yield her strength unknown
To the wisdom born beneath thy throne!

In wisdom and love firm is thy fame:
Enemies bow to revere thy name:
The world shall never tire to tell
Praise of the queen that reignèd well.

O FELIX ANIMA, DOMINA PRAECLARA,
AMORE SEMPER CORONABERE
REGINA CARA.



NOTES

NOTE

THE poems contained in Book I are my final selection from a volume published in 1873. Those of Book II are from a pamphlet published in 1879. Some of all these are in places corrected. Book III is made up of poems from a pamphlet published in 1880; to which are added others of about the same date. Some of these have already appeared in a volume printed for me by my friend the Rev. C. H. Daniel, in 1884. No. 6 was written to a tune by Dr. Howard. No. 19 is a pretty close translation of a poem by Théophile Gautier, which is itself a translation from the English by Thomas Moore in *The Epicurean*. All the poems in Book IV are now printed for the first time. No. 9 is a translation from a madrigal by Michael Angelo (No. VIII in *Guasti*). It is from my Comedy 'The Humours of the Court,' in which also No. 16 occurs. No. 11 is from a Sicilian nona rima stanza, the first poem in Trucchi's *Poesie Italiane inedite*. No. 3 is but the initial fragment of a poem which took another shape.

1890.

NOTE TO FOURTH EDITION

Book V was printed by Mr. Daniel in 1893 and published contemporaneously with an American edition, according to the requirements of the international copyright law. In passing the proofs of this edition I have altered the first line of No. 10: which being actually descriptive of a robin's song, now appears as such. It was first printed 'Pink-throated linnet.' I have also written 'and' for 'or' in two lines of V. 17, and amended I. 5.

1894.

NOTE TO PRESENT VOLUME

In revising my 'shorter poems' for this edition I have corrected a few misprints which seem to have run through the earlier editions; and, though I have refrained from the vanity of trying to improve old work which has been so often printed, I have amended one or two lines which seemed peculiarly bad. I hope that the 'new poems' which I have gathered to fill this second volume up to the size of the first, may be found in some respects better than

the old. Eclogues 2 and 3 have already appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and the poems numbered severally 6, 14, 15 and 21, in Mr. Elkin Mathews' *Shilling Garland*, No. II. 1896. The rest are printed here for the first time: they are of various dates, some of them were written this year for this volume.

R. B., Sept. 1899.

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